

Featuring interviews with Dr. Tom Sunic & Dr. Phillip W. Serna

# Black Oak Presents

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A Journal of Mid-American Culture



WINTER 2009



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BLACK OAK PRESENTS

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CULTURE

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## From the Desk of the Publisher

Michael Kleen



As we release this issue of *Black Oak Presents*, events that far-sighted people have warned of for two decades are coming to a head. Most of us will not even realize what happened, but I believe that we are living in the final days of our civilization as we have known it.

Our readers need to understand that this will not be the collapse portrayed in films like *Mad Max*, but a transition into economic, social, and intellectual bondage. As Europe descended into Feudalism after the collapse of the Roman Empire, we are descending into a new, bureaucratic Feudalism.

This will not be brought to you by men in black hats and handlebar mustaches, but by smiling bureaucrats in suits and gold watches. They will tell you not to worry, to just give them the authority and they will take care of everything so that you can get back to watching CSI.

Sometimes, between outrages like the recent \$850+ billion bailout, I tell myself that I'm over-reacting. Then, a few weeks later, I read something about how the Federal Reserve Chairman is refusing to release information on where the money is going, discarding the transparency required by the bailout legislation.

It is an almost unbelievable progression of events, but there it is, happening before our own eyes.

If the Federal Reserve Chairman and the Secretary of the Treasury are free to pick and choose which laws to follow, haven't we left the realm of republicanism and entered into bureaucratic despotism? What other words are there to describe politicians and Federal officials who act without any accountability?

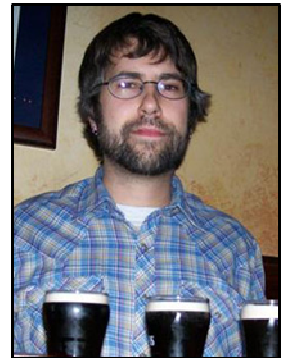
If the mass insanity surrounding the recent presidential election is any indication, we will not be able to turn to politics to save us. We must engage in a revolutionary cultural project, the fruit of which we may not see in our lifetimes. Help us strike the root so that the tree of liberty might once again bloom. ■

## Sustainability, Mutual Aid, and Liberation

Chris Lempa

"The mutual-aid tendency in humans has so remote an origin, and is so deeply interwoven with all the past evolution of the human race, that it has been maintained by mankind up to the present time, notwithstanding all vicissitudes of history."

- Peter Kropotkin,  
*Mutual Aid*



"Mutual aid is neighbor (government to government) helping neighbor when there is a need for additional resources, people, equipment, etc."

- Pinellas County Auxilliary  
*Communications Service*

With natural disasters turning cities into ruins, now is a good time to think about the rebuilding process. Initially I agreed with [former] Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert that rebuilding the disaster prone area didn't make much sense, but I have changed my mind. Done correctly, New Orleans, Louisiana; Greensburg, Kansas; and other devastated cities can become models of sustainable development and Mutual Aid. This article will focus, loosely, on New Orleans post-Hurricane Katrina.

The first step would be to keep the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) as far away as possible. Ideally, the USACE should be disbanded since it has caused much more harm than good. It is a bureaucratic entity and is very vulnerable to political trends and whims. For instance, George W. Bush would have been able to attack the USACE's budget and programs even if Bill Clinton had allocated full funding for those projects. That is a major problem. There are plenty of independent architecture and engineering firms that focus on sustainable building that can replace this antiquated agency.

*Continued on Page 45...*



## Dr. Tom Sunic:

### Critic of the Post-Modern Age

*Dr. Tomislav (or Tom, for short) Sunic is a former professor at California State University, the University of California, and Juniata College in Pennsylvania. From 1993 until 2001 he served as a Croatian diplomat all over the European Union. He has written several books, including *Titoism and Dissidence* (1995) and *Homo americanus: Child of the Postmodern Age* (2007).*

**BLACK OAK:** You describe American and European intellectuals as ruled by a regime of self-censorship. Where did this censorship originate, and what are the concrete ways in which it is enforced and encouraged?

**DR. SUNIC:** The goal of liberal totalitarianism is to avoid using physical violence. Instead, it reinforces the need for citizens' civic acceptance. Being 'out of the loop' is viewed as antisocial behavior. Hence the reason that more and more professors, or for that matter journalists, resort to disclaimers and conditionals sentences in their writings. Nobody wants to rock the boat. Even well-tenured professors in humanities, who are more or less aware of the mendacious nature of the liberal system, and who know the system from the inside, prefer self-denial. We are dealing here with a typical form of postmodern behavior.

**BLACK OAK:** What can the consequences be for "speaking out of turn" at universities, newspapers, and in the American media generally?

**DR. SUNIC:** Speaking out of turn turns a free-thinker first into a pariah and then into a person likely to get fired—regardless of his skills and qualifications. I remember when I was a professor in political science in the States, at Cal State



Fullerton and Cal State Long Beach, I couched my statements in neutral terminology so my minority students could not perceive any Eurocentrism on my part. It was make-believe lecturing. In view of the fact that more than 20 per cent of my class was Afro-American, Hispanic, and Asian I did not have any qualms about giving them all passing grades—however mediocre some of them were. There was always the fear of possible lawsuits for racial insensitivity hovering in the back of my mind.

**BLACK OAK:** What role do you think semantics—in other words, the meaning of the words and phrases we employ—control thought in post-modern America?

**DR. SUNIC:** Take those heavily loaded words and expressions such as "anti-Semitism," "white supremacism," "hate speech," or "fascism." All these words and many, many more have been subject to semantic distortions. This is especially the case with the word "Nazism," a word which has entirely lost its original meaning and which serves today as the best tool to pathologize the opponent who challenges liberal mythology. I'd suggest studying first the masters of discourse and clearly finding out what their agenda is. Before anything can be done, real dissidents, be they in America or Europe, must first re-appropriate the public discourse.

**BLACK OAK:** As the 2008 presidential elections were gearing up, we saw neo-con pundits using the terms "racist" and "anti-Semite" to smear controversial figures surrounding the Obama campaign, and then later they used it somewhat effectively against Representative Ron Paul. How can the public discourse be re-appropriated when politicians of all stripes have learned to use these words as weapons against their opponents?

**DR. SUNIC:** Both candidates are trying to outsmart each other via an overkill of philo-semitic lingo. This transforms the campaign and the much-vaunted American democracy into a grotesque reality show. I wonder how neocons observe this carnival. They must be laughing themselves to death. This reminds me of mass Communist rallies in North Korea or ex-Yugoslavia. I remember that as a kid in communist Yugoslavia I was forced to posture in this exact same philo-communist mimicry, even to the point of shedding fake tears in honor of great communist leaders passing nearby.

**BLACK OAK:** In *Homo americanus*, you wrote, "there are social minefields engendered by political and academic elites in postmodern America that are meant to be 'off limits' to intellectual scrutiny." What are some examples of these "minefields," and what are the consequences for treading on them?

**DR. SUNIC:** There are two of them; the first one being modern historiography, including the Jewish question during and after WWII. The second is the issue of multiracialism, wrongly labeled "multiculturalism." These are two main minefields that need to be addressed with extreme care in the liberal system.

But let us not fool ourselves. Each epoch and each polity throughout history has had its self-evident myths that required if not mass complacency, then at least tacit acceptance by skeptical individuals. The issue is not whether social myths are true or false; the fact is that they are necessary in order to legitimize a system in place.

**BLACK OAK:** What is "Americanism," and how do you believe it parallels Communism? Why were Communist officials in Eastern Europe so eager to embrace Americanism after the collapse of the Soviet Union?

**DR. SUNIC:** The word "Americanism" has been also subject to semantic distortions. Back in the 1920s it had a completely different meaning from the present one. It clearly has a pejorative rhyme in Europe, particular among right-wing intellectuals, who associate Americanism with uprootedness and the dictatorship of money. Former Communist officials in East Europe do not have second thoughts in rejecting communist ideals and replacing them with Americanism.

After all, as I argue in my writings, Communism disappeared in the East because many of its tenets have been better implemented in the West, including America. Take the communist language for instance which has different signs in America yet expresses the same Soviet message: "affirmative action," "ethnic sensitivity training," "hate speech," etc. These American expressions were all part of the lexical arsenal in ex-communist countries. On a practical level the prompt support by East European rulers for U.S. involvement in Iraq in 2003, tells you much about the servility of the ex-

post communist elites.

**BLACK OAK:** It was astonishing to hear both vice presidential candidates proclaim their "love" for a foreign country—Israel—during the vice presidential debates last October. Why do you think many Americans are enamored with the Jewish state, and why would candidates running for office in the United States need to explicitly mention a "love" for Israel rather than, say, any of our other allies?

**DR. SUNIC:** To understand that mindset we need to delve into history. This is part of standard aberration among ruling elites all over the West, i.e. using Israel as their psychological super-ego, as a cover, as an alibi, as an excuse, as an asset. It is something "self-evident" in American public life. The most important thing, though, is that all of America is permeated with Judaism from the bottom up.

America is essentially a Biblical theocracy—albeit in a secular form. We often hear about agnostic founding fathers, but rarely about the Judeo-Calvinist spirit which played a crucial role on the U.S. mindset for centuries. The problem is not the Jews; the problems are those who embrace the monotheist god.

**BLACK OAK:** In what ways do you believe that American liberalism shares a fundamentally identical worldview with Judeo-Christianity?

**DR. SUNIC:** Liberalism and communism are essentially, if I can paraphrase Carl Schmitt, secular transpositions of Judeo-Christian beliefs. Neither is Catholic Europe much better. Yet Calvinism brought this judeophile Christian replica to the American shores in a more glaring fashion, stripped of its critical content.

Liberalism in America draws its political legitimacy not in Washington but in distant Jerusalem. We are seeing the price tag of it daily.

**BLACK OAK:** What about American conservative fears that the United States is turning away from its Biblical roots? Isn't our culture today a rejection of Christian values?

**DR. SUNIC:** Having been born into a conservative Catholic family this remains the most painful dilemma for me. Wishing to shrug off the deep-seated Christian roots of many white Americans, and start preaching about Wotan or Freya or sun-worshipping, may sound like signs of early lunacy.

However, we must emphasize that Christianity is by definition a religion of universal brotherhood of all men. White anti-Semitism is a form of self-defeating neurosis. Did we not turn Yahweh, a Jewish god, into an anti-Semitic Christian god? This type of "negative legitimacy," I fear, will lead us anew into another round of hatred, pogroms, and civil wars.

Look at St. Paul and his Epistles to the Galatians where he openly calls for a multicultural system-religion. If we want to trace the dynamics of modern globalism, or for that matter the incoming collapse of our society, we must carefully reconsider the legacy of the Levantine heritage.

**BLACK OAK:** In Chapter 3 of *Homo americanus*, you wrote, "Never has the West preached so much tolerance and so much multi-racial conviviality, at a time when the whole system is ripe with all forms of subterranean violence and mutual hatred." That statement seems to fly in the face of all assumptions about American cohesion and unity in the years after the September 11 terror attacks. What is your evidence for this "subterranean violence and mutual hatred," and how does it tie into the discourse of tolerance?

**DR. SUNIC:** In the ex-Soviet Union, when flaws and failures of communism had to be mended, communist politicians thought that the solution was to bring in more communism, not less. We have exactly the same mindset with U.S. liberals and free



marketers. When the whole state of America is on the verge of economic collapse you hear hollering for more free market. When the whole country is balkanized to the hilt, you hear politicians and academics claiming that the only cure is to bring in more non-European immigrants.

Despite its aura of invincibility, the US system is extremely fragile system and could implode like the ex-Soviet Union at any moment.

**BLACK OAK:** What about the idea that more racial and cultural diversity benefits the United States? Haven't we moved beyond the animosities of the past?

**DR. SUNIC:** Does it? Racially homogenous countries have much more political stability than multiracial countries. Take Japan for instance, a country with a high level of civic responsibility. In homogenous countries, citizens develop early-on a sense of community and identity and mutual trust. "In-group feelings" are a typical hereditary trait... part of our evolution.

Let me be blunt if I may. When we were younger, when we dated some girl for real, I suppose both parties looked out for someone from the same gene pool? I did. There are serious studies on this subject. For that matter I could cite dozens of scholars to support my statement. Or for that matter I could refer you to some of my books and essays.

**BLACK OAK:** Recently we have seen dramatic examples of the limits of speech in Europe and Canada. Early last year, a Canadian reverend was charged with a human rights violation and faced a \$5,000 indemnity for a 2002 letter to the editor in which he criticized the official government position on homosexuality.

Whether you agree with his view or not, the legal prosecution of opinion seems anathema to our fundamental views of freedom of expression. Do you believe that similar "hate speech" laws will ever find a home here in the United States?

**DR. SUNIC:** Surely, America can brag about its First Amendment, but let us not forget that political rectitude is being enforced in US higher education, often with more vehemence than in Europe. The great benefit of Communism, which I lived as a kid in Yugoslavia, was its transparent vulgarity to the point that everybody knew that communism was a farce.

Repression in the West, including the USA, is more insidious as it is carried out with more sophisticated means. On a personal level yes, let me tell you... as a naturalized US citizen I have been considering moving back to the States and restarting my teaching career and to be of service to some local community.

My solid background in literature, languages, philosophy and all my titles have not been of much help. I guess I am overqualified as I am getting lavish praises—but no job offer. It probably has to do with my "guilt by association" and my politically incorrect views.

**BLACK OAK:** Have you experienced any kind of intellectual backlash since *Homo americanus* came out last year?

**DR. SUNIC:** So far the response has been very good... but usually from academics and individuals who are more or less aware of the closing of the American mind, and for that matter the closing of the American century. The book contains many translations from German and French and it provides solid bibliography. I think it is a good read. I'd like to see some feedback from the Left, too. ■

To read more about Dr. Tom Sunic, visit

<http://www.tomsunic.info>

Interview conducted and edited by Michael Kleen.

## Dr. Phillip W. Serna:

### Bringing Viols and an Appreciation for the Arts to our Schools

*Dr. Phillip W. Serna is currently on faculty at Valparaiso University and the Music Institute of Chicago where the Viols in Our Schools outreach program is in residence.*

*Dr. Serna received his Doctorate of Music from Northwestern University where he studied double bass with DaXun Zhang and Michael Hovnanian. Dr. Serna is a freelance writer and an active performer and pedagogue of the double bass and viola da gamba with numerous Midwestern orchestras.*

**BLACK OAK:** Dr. Serna, our readers would like to know, first and foremost, what drew you to classical music.

**DR. SERNA:** I had interest in the arts and especially music from a young age. I started on violin, then switched to the guitar and double bass during my middle school years. Being surrounded by music in film and television growing up, it was natural that it would become an integral part of my cultural identity. The power of music intertwined with visual media can be very powerful. From playing in metal bands, to orchestras and later Contemporary Music and Early Music groups, my interests have been nothing but eclectic and varied.

My focus on classical music, or *Western art music*, really took off for me when I was accepted to the High School for the Performing and Visual Arts in the Houston area. At HSPVA, I was surrounded by creative musicians and visual and performing artists of all kinds who all pushed each other to work at the height of their creativity.

I became enthralled by contemporary music while I worked on my Bachelors degree at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music in the late 1990s. I was fascinated by the challenges of performing and relating dissonant and unfamiliar works to an aud



-ience. At the same time, I became deeply intrigued by certain aspects of musical performance: theory (how music is constructed) & the history surrounding compositions. This interest led me to Early Music, and therefore to the viol—opening up whole new repertoires to perform that I did not have access to before. The creative and collaborative aspects of chamber music are what I find most engaging. You have a lot more freedom in this smaller medium than in the orchestral literature, although both offer many rewarding challenges as a performer.

**BLACK OAK:** Having been raised in Houston, Texas, what influenced your decision to pursue a career in music in the Chicagoland area?



**DR. SERNA:** I had been away from Houston for some time. I did my undergraduate studies at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music on double bass and moved to Chicago to join the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, which had a fellowship that paid for my Masters degree at Northwestern University. It was a pleasure to be able to perform under conductors such as Barenboim, Boulez, Eschenbach and Järvi, but more importantly it was at Northwestern where I thoroughly fell in love with the viol. I studied at Northwestern as a double bass major and with Mary Springfels on viol throughout my Master's and Doctorate.

I felt the chamber and solo literature for the viol was dynamic, full of contrasts and wonderful challenges. This really broadened my business prospects, as it were. As a freelance musician, you have a very narrow career path, but with the viol becoming an integral part of my professional life, it opened up so many more performance opportunities. I have had the wonderful privilege of performing on viol with a number of Chicago-area groups such as the Newberry Consort, the Chicago Early Music Consort as well as the Spirit of Gambo—a Chicago Consort of Viols, a group of which I am a founding member. I find that Chicago has a very vibrant arts scene and is filled with many creative ensembles and entrepreneurs who have started new and dynamic projects.

**BLACK OAK:** Why did you create Viols in Our Schools, and what do you hope to achieve with the program?

**DR. SERNA:** In 2006, Viols in Our Schools came into existence on a whim. For a number of years, I took time to go and spend school days at different schools recruiting students into my private studio. I felt that I thoroughly enjoyed meeting students in their own environment and could perform and interact with them on their own terms. The variety of schools that I have visited include suburbs of Chicago to inner-city schools—students of all

ethnicities, backgrounds and socio-economic status.

I bring a chest of viols into schools to show students how they are played and to introduce them to important aspects of performance practice – research that informs us about how different styles of music were performed during several different eras. Many schools do not have budgets to have a comprehensive music history course available to their students, so it is important to incorporate it as early as possible so students understand the context that surrounds the music they are learning.

In order to further assist in promoting my efforts, I was invited to submit an article to the American String Teachers Association String Teacher's Cookbook—Recipes for a Successful Program edited by Joanne May for Meredith Music Publications. Additionally in 2008, Viols in our Schools became an official outreach program of the Music Institute of Chicago, a community music school whose Evanston campus hosts Illinois' only non-collegiate Early Music Department.

My goal is that we will be able to get the program happening in more schools, and the goals that I hope to achieve include: 1) increasing visibility for the viol family & Early Music through classroom education, 2) to make music and history a tangible force in students' lives, and 3) assist in helping those who want to play viol to have access to them.

**BLACK OAK:** What steps does Viols in Our Schools take to further those goals?

**DR. SERNA:** Day-long residencies are the mainstay of the program, where I go into a school spend almost the entire day performing for and interacting with students, with as many as 7-8 performances in one day. The reality is that would be very costly for an ensemble to do, but being one person, it is a lot more cost-efficient.

My presentation consists of demonstrating the treble, tenor bass viols, discussing the history of the instruments, performing works for viols, and

then letting students try out instruments. The degree to which each of these activities occurs varies on the size of the group—smaller groups are always more hands on experiences.

Additionally, a feature that has been successful, in tandem with the day-long residencies, has been collaborative concerts. These vary in format from concerts with a schools orchestra, to recitals organized as part of another institution's offerings. In March of 2008, Chicago harpsichordist Jason Moy joined me for a concert in Naperville at Neuqua Valley High School where we performed concertos by Telemann & Bach as well as Bach's 3<sup>rd</sup> Sonata for Viola da Gamba & Harpsichord.

During the fall, I collaborated with orchestra director Dana Green at Naperville North High School where we organized the Naperville North Renaissance Strings Project—a semester-long project introducing students to aspects of performance practice on modern instruments with a focus on the consort music of John Dowland. Another example of the latter is, prior to a recent symphony concert, I performed and discussed the viol with patrons. This proved to be most successful with that orchestra's patrons, so I hope I can setup more events like that in the near future.

My online projects include arrangements of viol composition for string orchestra, and will hopefully, have excerpts available for download by school orchestra directors soon. Another web project that has been successful has been the GambaCast—Viols in Our Schools' video podcast that started in April of 2008. With a number of ensemble collaborators, as well as solo artists, the podcast works on an international scale to offer viola da gamba performances and information for the curious to find. Look for it in iTunes and at [www.thegambacast.org](http://www.thegambacast.org).

**BLACK OAK:** For those of us who are not familiar with classical instruments, what is a Viol? How is it unique from other stringed instruments?

**DR. SERNA:** A viol (pronounced 'vy-al'), or viola da gamba, is literally a 'leg-viol.' All the instruments in the viol family are suspended on a performer's legs. It is a six-stringed instrument that is fretted like a modern guitar, although there are Baroque bass viols that have an added seventh string. Unlike a modern guitar, the frets are made of gut and are wrapped around the neck. The instrument has a flat back, and because of the wood is very thin, the instrument resonates, or vibrates for a long time. The tuning is slightly different than a modern guitar. The instrument is tuned in fourths with a central third. Like many Western instruments, the viol is part of a family with many different sizes (from smallest to largest): Paredessus, Treble, Alto (less commonly used) Tenor, Bass, and Violone (Contrabass).

The modern double bass is the only modern stringed instrument to derive many of its characteristics from the viol family. Modern players will find the bowing style unusual. It is what we refer to as an underhand grip. Before the introduction of the concave Tourte bow, or modern bow in the late 1700s, the bow was slightly convex, and viol players held it from underneath which gave the performer the freedom to attenuate the tension of the hors-hair. This is a wonderful challenge for string players who have never tried a viol bow. It is amazing how little physical effort is required to make a sound, but in the end, it requires a lot of control.

Viols were often played in a consort, or in ensemble together. Typically, consorts ranged from small in number up to six players.

There are numerous solo pieces that survive from the 17th & 18th centuries. Additionally, composers that are familiar to audiences today such as J.S. Bach & G.P. Telemann composed music for the viol. There are numerous other viol composers including Abel, C.P.E. Bach, Byrd, Coperario, Gibbons, Hume, Jenkins, Lawes, Marais and Sainte-Colombe—each completely different from the other. Some composers focus on chamber music, others on



solo literature, but all of them offering compositions that are rare and beautiful.

**BLACK OAK:** Why do you think the fine arts have become a 'bad word' in contemporary popular culture?

**DR. SERNA:** Consumerism has run rampant and the fine arts have paid dearly because of it. Just watching television gives you an idea of where music is relegated—to the background. Arts are made to seem so pretentious and alien as compared to the media juggernauts controlling what people watch on television and hear on the radio. Music and artists are treated as a commodity, and it is painful to see a culture that is more home-bound than ever, with fewer and fewer people going to see live performances.

The media has sidelined so-called 'Classical Music,' as well as jazz, and over-categorized music in general into convenient labels in order to market it. In a consumer culture that is obsessed with the everyman, it is no surprise that truly exceptional artists will never be heard in the mainstream. Even with a sometimes bleak assessment regarding the arts and culture in America, the Internet has actually seen a rise in the sales of classical music, while the brick and mortar stores offer little to no selection of recorded materials. Many musicians and artists are embracing the new media, and I have hope that the arts and culture will thrive again as a backlash against current trends.

**BLACK OAK:** What do you think children gain from having a background in classical music?

**DR. SERNA:** There is a lot of research that points to higher brain function in children when they are exposed to the arts early on in life. This translates into better performance on tests and in schools, yes, but I think more importantly it helps them develop into fuller human beings. Childhood education could benefit from interdisciplinary studies.

Integrating music, history and art will give students a richer experience of our world.

There is such a social-Darwinist superiority complex built into modern American culture that I think students don't seem to respect or attempt to truly understand events around the world. I think this is where classical music helps. America was built on ideas of diversity, and this does include European art forms too.

**BLACK OAK:** What do you see as the future of the Viols in Our Schools program?

**DR. SERNA:** In addition to expanding school residencies to more schools in and around the Chicago area, I want to expand the series of collaborative concerts to colleges and middle schools as well. All of this depends on funding or logistics to make them happen. It is most important to me to expose not only young people to music for these beautiful instruments, but I want to bring this literature to a wider audience. I hope the number of collaborators for the podcast will continue to grow. It is just a matter of patience and time. Thank you very much for taking the time to interview me about Viols in Our Schools. I passionately believe it to be a worthwhile endeavor and I hope that your readers will agree with me. ■

*Find out more about Dr. Serna at [www.phillipwserna.com](http://www.phillipwserna.com) and his viola da gamba educational outreach projects and podcast at [www.violsinourschools.org](http://www.violsinourschools.org) & [www.thegambacast.org](http://www.thegambacast.org).*

*Interview conducted and edited by Michael Kleen.*

## Killing Special

Christina Sanantonio



**Some friends and I** were recently talking about special things from our childhoods and we realized that most of what we really loved and remembered were not toys or possessions, but experiences. I enjoyed trick or treating, but I loved when my mom painted the giant

Pumpkin on our huge round window each Halloween. I enjoyed Christmas and my favorite present of all time was my Big Wheel (with handbrake), but what was really exciting, what was special, was the playing with so many children and listening to family stories. One friend remembered that some of the best memories she had involved taking family hikes.

Do you remember special things from childhood? I remember the excitement of a birthday cake, the rare treat of a trip to Champaign [Illinois] to see a movie, or the ice cream treats in the shape of snowmen and reindeer that my grandmother could buy only at Christmastime. I loved visits with a certain friend because her mother served us white bread, bologna, and processed cheese sandwiches smothered in Miracle Whip, cherry Kool-Aid to drink and Twinkies for dessert. Haute cuisine for a 7 year old. All of those delicious foods were strictly forbidden in my “whole wheat bread and water is good for you” home.

I remember the anticipation of Saturday morning cartoons; the weekend ritual that included rising at dawn on Saturday, watching the blank set until the station finally came on, and savoring every moment until they ended promptly at 12:00pm—not to return until next weekend. These shows in no way resembled the psychedelic frenzy of action and insanity that are many modern cartoons.

We tend to idealize our childhoods, but I

think most adults would agree that special events seemed to resonate more in our past in part because of the steady amount of calm and uneventful space that surrounded our lives as children. We existed in what felt like a slower, more cohesive world and our indulgences were only occasional.

I wonder about modern children and what they will remember as special. Is special fading? Are the emotions of joy, wonder, anticipation all dying under the crushing weight of our “have everything instantly” culture?

Amy Dacyczyn, a wonderful writer, told the story of taking her five young children to the ice cream store—a very rare occurrence for a family on a tight budget. Her children quietly debated their flavor choice and then sat in wide-eyed silence—blissfully savoring their junior-sized cones. Other parents, seeing the same level of enjoyment from a junior cone, and wishing to create more happiness, would opt to visit the ice cream shop more. But with frequent exposure, specialness begins to die, and sooner or later the parent finds themselves buying the triple scoop, brownie deluxe sundae with flakes of candied gold leaf in order to elicit the same ‘oohs and ahhs’ from the child. Eventually, with regular trips to get ice cream, even the most deluxe treat become blasé and you wind up with an ice cream-jaded 8 year old. To keep specialness, time and space are necessary between cones.

We are all familiar with over-indulged children. They seem to be everywhere—including in my own home. Remember the television ad for a credit card that told parents, “You want to give them everything...?” It not so subtly conveyed that you must give your children any item they desire to be a good parent, and that their credit card was just the thing to help you succeed. One of the ads even showed a misty-eyed dad handing an elephant off to his small daughter. The image isn’t as farfetched as it may seem. Granted, we aren’t legally allowed to dole out elephants, but we are extravagant in so many equally exorbitant ways: we provide limo service for children’s birthday parties where



children are entertained by acts worthy of Las Vegas. We hand out stuffed goodie bags filled not with the trinkets and pieces of candy but more reminiscent of stuffed Christmas stockings.

We have only to watch television to see the popular reality show where witless parents spend tens of thousands on “Sweet 16” parties where their children, all in dire need of immediate Oompa-Loompa intervention, arrive in Cinderella carriages and aim to inspire envy among their peers. We hand teens credit cards to use *carte blanche*. Instead of allowing children to build a playhouse made of chairs and sheets, we kill their imaginations by giving them \$5,000 custom built playhouses.

A recent CNN/TIME poll showed that 68% of parents indicated that their children were “very spoiled.” Yet, we parents behave as if we had no choice or control. Parenting is certainly a difficult job—perhaps more difficult now than ever before. Our children are bombarded with advertising and images urging them to buy and spend. At our house we have long struggled with basketball shoe addictions. Often, the answer has to be “no” because at \$125.00 or more per pair, we simply can’t afford them, but also because in our culture teens have become driven consumers with a combined purchasing power of \$150 billion per year. I would like my boys to develop some skills to fight affluenza. I don’t want to raise spoiled brats.

I often feel that the culture is a huge, fast moving vehicle and we are being swept along within. We are bombarded with images and shaped by messages over which we feel we have little control.

What happens to children who are over-indulged? Over-indulged children grow into over-indulged young people and later into over-indulged adults who believe rules only apply to others. Over-indulged young people exhibit obnoxious behaviors with superior attitudes, are often unmotivated and appear jaded. What is left when you have seen it all, done it all, and had it all by 16? Not many things will be special for Generation G (G for gimme).

As adults these kids probably won’t be able to tell the difference between needs and wants, will need constant stimulation and entertainment from others, might be deficient in basic life skills, be unable to take responsibility for their own actions, and lack empathy for others.

Education specialist Ada Alden, who helps teachers learn to handle over-indulged students, recently noted, “If you water a plant too much it dies. Even if you are watering it out of too much love, it still dies.” Did you miss that? Nationally, teachers are being trained how to handle overindulged children (and parents).

So what can we, as parents and people who care about families and children, do to cope with the prevailing gimme culture? First, we can give ourselves and our time. The prevailing notion of “quality time” has not benefited children and families. Children need quantity time. Simply sitting with your child while he or she draws or builds with blocks is so meaningful to them.

We can make family rituals—celebrations of events and holidays that don’t involve the giving of things, but sharing of experiences and family stories. We can work together to form a stronger community, building ties with neighbors and friends. We can help our children most by slowing down and finding more quiet time, without rushing, television, or electronics in our hectic lives. We need to allow time and space for special. We can change our culture by simply slowing down and talking with one another. ■

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# *Think on things that Make You Smile:*

## *A Review of The Tossers' On a Fine Spring Evening*

Patrick Sullivan

For roughly fifteen years now, Chicago-based outfit The Tossers have been fusing Celtic folk music with an American punk ethos. It is a natural fit because roots of both—punk music and the Chicago Irish—are firmly planted in the working class. Although The Tossers can claim seven members in total, their sound remains very simple and straightforward, never reaching too far (the term “tossers” means throwaway, but has alternative connotations in British slang).

This is music you can dance to. It is infectious, but also very much “for the moment.” This formula is prevalent among groups like Flogging Molly and Dropkick Murphys—two more punk bands that incorporate Celtic folk—and young people here in the United States have made stars out of them. What The Tossers lack in terms of comparative success, they more than make up for it with their unmatched sincerity and passion.

This fall saw the release of the group's eighth full length studio album, *On A Fine Spring Evening*. It is exactly what you would come to expect from a Tossers album—a good mix of songs about alcohol (“Whiskey Makes Me Crazy”), women (“A Fine Lass You Are”), Irish nostalgia (“The Rocky Road to Dublin”), and plenty of Celtic hoedown fun (hidden track).

Although electric guitars are utilized throughout the album, the sound is a collage of various acoustic and traditional instruments. Lead vocalist Tony Duggins plays the mandolin, bassist Dan Shaw also plays the concertina, Clay Hansen is a full-time banjo player, Rebecca Manthe plays the fiddle, and Aaron Duggins pulls double duty as a backing vocalist and tin whistle player. Most of the songs clock in at about three minutes. The lone song



that greatly exceeds that time is the ballad “Get Back,” which moves along so quickly you hardly even notice its length.

The closing track, “Hunger Strike/Harmony,” exemplifies what The Tossers are all about. Tony Duggins sings unaccompanied about the pain associated with heartbreak, drinking your sorrows away, and being alone. The song reminds us all to: “*think on things that make you smile, if it's only for awhile.*” Even through tough times, there is always some good to be taken from them. Good music, good beer, and a good time are always there to be had.

The Tossers love what they do and love the city of Chicago. They are quite active in the local scene, so be sure to check out one of their upcoming shows. For more info, visit [www.thetossers.com](http://www.thetossers.com) ■

*Patrick Sullivan is fidgety, thinks too much, and can never relax. He lives on Chicago's north side and enjoys ice cream.*



# heATHen CRUSADE 3

A Photo-Essay  
Michael Kleen



*Lunarium had many surprises in store for us at the Heathen Crusade 3.*

between some of the sets. While there was less musical variety than in previous years, the intensity of the bands more than made up for that deficiency.

In my mind, there were two highlights on the first day of the Crusade: Lunarium and Ancient Rites. Billing itself as Celtic power metal, Lunarium hails from Ohio and boasts of a mission to “honor the moon, a symbol of their goddess.” Their stage show was, hands down, the best of either day. It was all in good fun when one of the band members brought out a small Grim Reaper doll, but when a giant troll puppet took the stage during their song “Troll Slayer,” I was instantly converted into a fan. The song ended when one of the band members ‘slayed’ the troll with his guitar, accompanied by a spray of fake blood.

Nearly two years in coming, the third installment of the Heathen Crusade metal festival brought metal fans from around the globe to a small venue in St. Paul, Minnesota. Known for their vibrant music scene, St. Paul and Minneapolis coughed up two days of mayhem from the bowels of their industrial dystopia, and metal warriors descended from Oregon, northern Mexico, Tennessee, Ohio, Canada, Belgium, and Scandinavia to briefly inundate the Twin Cities like a tide of water extinguishing the fires of Isengard.

The Heathen Crusade 3 featured a greater number of local acts and bands from North America than its previous incarnations. For two nights, thirteen bands took the stage with a special acoustic appearance by Nechochwen in the bar area of Station 4 in



*Under Eden, a local band from Minnesota, set the stage for the second day of the Crusade.*



Velnias (pictured above) is an epic black metal band cloaked in secrecy, but their stage setup, complete with dozens of burning candles and soft blue lighting, was what made them stand out among the early sets.

Wolven Ancestry, from Ontario, Canada (pictured on the right), seemed to be the most anticipated band of the evening. With their naked paganism and lust for nature, Wolven Ancestry fully embraced their music. 'Lord Defiler,' their lead vocalist, cloaked himself in furs, and even donned a helmet made from a wolf's head sporting horns during one song. They are currently unsigned, but I have a feeling that state of affairs will soon change.



Woods of Ypres (pictured on the left), also from Ontario, Canada, added a little variety to the evening with a more modern look and style. Competent musicians, they impressed me with their command of various metal styles.

Moonsorrow headlined the first Heathen Crusade, and now they were back for more. With their brand of epic heathen metal, they shook the walls of the tiny St. Paul venue. Rarely does such majesty grace our ears on this side of the Atlantic.

All in all, the Heathen Crusade 3 offered a good mix of local, national, and international bands. I heard some great music, met some great people, and drank some great beer. The memories will last a lifetime. ■





# SAM MOFFIE

## A Midwestern-Artist Profile

Sam Moffie was born in Brookline, Massachusetts, but grew up and has spent his life in Boardman, Ohio. A divorced man with three grown children, he has managed to build a writing career while raising a family and owning his own small business.

Making the most of a bad situation, Sam began to seriously focus on his writing after being the victim of a hit and run in the summer of 2006. "Laid up with six broken bones in my back and neck was a real motivator in recharging my writing," he told us.

His first novel, *Swap*, was published in January 2007 by UEL Enterprises. A story about a man who went from playing baseball to swapping wives, the book has received good reviews. "There are bizarre choices, and then there are bizarre choices. Sam Moffie's antihero, Sheldon Marsh, leads us through wife-swapping, baseball and other great American distractions. Brilliant, original... it's Bull Durham on steroids," author Meryl Getline has written.

*Swap* was named a finalist in the fiction humor category in the Midwestern Independent Publishers Contest.

Since that time, Sam has written two other works, *The Organ and the Grinder Monkey* and his latest *No Mad*. *No Mad* is hot off the presses, having been just released this holiday season.

*No Mad* is the story of the great American road trip. "Racing home to share the news of a long awaited book deal, Aaron Abrams unexpectedly finds his wife and beloved brother together," Sam revealed. "So what's a guy to do? Road trip! And what a road trip it becomes. From Highway 80 in Pennsylvania, to New York City, to Custer, South Dakota with a fabulous ending in Niagra Falls.



It's about family, friends, and self discovery."

Sam's goal is to inject as much humor as possible into his writing, with a tinge of controversy, of course. "I write about people," he explained. "I put them in circumstances that are not easy to comprehend, but it all comes together in the end."

Sam has told us that his influences are F. Scott Fitzgerald, Kurt Vonnegut, John Irving, and Joseph Heller. His advice to new writers is to not let rejection get them down. "A lot of rejection is a part of this business. Patience and re-writing go a long way."

Sam Moffie has proven that a man from a small town in Ohio can achieve his goals with a little tenacity and with the help of some blind luck, or, er... misfortune. ■

# BRYN RICH

## A Midwestern-Artist Profile

Charleston, Illinois continues to produce some of central Illinois' most aspiring musical talents. Bryn Rich is no exception. Thriving in the local coffee shop scene, Bryn plays the guitar, piano, mandolin, ukulele, and does his own vocals. He began his musical career with the guitar, and each instrument led to another.

"One terrible performance at my high school's Spanish Club dinner led to voice lessons," he told us. "It's like a really weird, sea sick chain."

Bryn began by jamming with friends, which later evolved into playing live shows. His first performance was at Common Grounds in Mattoon, Illinois, a town ten miles west of Charleston. "My first show was a two hour set," he explained. "The audience response was good."

Not all of his appearances have gone so smoothly. "There was one time in Terre Haute [Indiana] last summer where, after I finished the first song, you could have heard crickets," he admitted. "I swear, that's the most terrifying feeling, when you're up there trying to prove to these people that they should listen to you, and they're just dead..."

It was every performer's nightmare, but Bryn swallowed his pride and played through it. "In the end, I just decided to test some new songs, play some weird covers, and have fun with it before taking off."

Bryn describes his music as alternative rock with hints of country and folk. His influences include R.E.M., The Smiths, Talking Heads, Uncle Tupelo, and Ryan Adams. "For a while I really hated the 'folk' label," he explained, "but now I'm starting to realize that maybe it isn't so bad."

Drawing from his own experience, Bryn has some interesting advice for his fellow musicians.



"If there's one thing that helps my writing, it's playing unfinished songs in front of people," he told us. "It makes me panic and change lines as I'm singing it, and that damage control really brings out some ideas you wouldn't normally have."

He also counseled us to not take ourselves too seriously, advice that he takes to heart. One of his recent projects involved working with a comedic band called Taiquarius, who writes and performs songs about wolves.

Bryn is currently in the process of starting a free form jazz group called The Frisky 7. He would also like to record an instrumental album alongside the two he has already self-produced, *Amerika* and *Gold Dust*.

If the past is any indication, we should be hearing much more from this versatile Charlestonian in the future. ■



# Longing for Home:

*A Review of Bill Kauffman's Assorted Works*

Cathal Liam McFee

Kauffman, Bill. *Ain't My America: The Long, Noble History of Antiwar Conservatism and Middle-American Anti-Imperialism*. Metropolitan Books, 2008.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Look Homeward, America: In Search of Reactionary Radicals and Front-Porch Anarchists*. ISI Books, 2006.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Dispatches from the Muckdog Gazette: A Mostly Affectionate Account of a Small Town's Fight to Survive*. Henry Holt and Company, 2003.

\_\_\_\_\_. *America First!: Its History, Culture, and Politics*. Prometheus Books, 1995.

"...I'll

Come home to Illinois on the

Day after tomorrow

It's so hard and its cold here

And I'm tired of taking orders

I miss old Rockford town

Up by the Wisconsin border

What I miss you won't believe

Shoveling snow and raking leaves"

-Tom Waits, "Day After Tomorrow"

Had he known of this song, Bill Kauffman could well have used these words in *Ain't My America*, his paean to the values of home and hearth and his jeremiad against the greatest threats to those values, war and empire. The unnamed soldier in this song does not merely wish to escape the unidentified war, he wishes to return *home*, to a *specific place*, Rockford, Illinois, to live in peace and—of all things!—shovel snow and rake leaves, the quotidian tasks that mark the passing of the season in a place one calls home. He is, as Kauffman says in *Look Homeward, America*, "one of the lucky ones... A soldier who has his place to which he can return."<sup>1</sup>

It is this trajectory, toward "the local, the particular, the human scale," and away from "expansion, war, and empire," which Kauffman traces throughout the four books discussed in this review. Whether decrying the "act of paricide" by which his hometown of Batavia, New York "tore out... its five-block heart,"<sup>2</sup> or pointing out the painfully obvious, though never honestly discussed, political reality that, in this country, those who have a place—"a place on earth" they can call home, whether it be the place of their birth or a place of their choosing—are ruled by the placeless,<sup>3</sup> Kauffman is always inciting his readers to "[r]ediscover the permanent things,"<sup>4</sup> the "Little Way,"<sup>5</sup> and the "acts of recovery, restoration, and resurrection"<sup>6</sup> by which communities and regions devastated by decades of economic and political centralization can be made free and whole again.

What sets Kauffman's argument apart, and what will doubtless prove infuriating to both liberals and neo-conservatives, is his opposition to war and imperialism, bigness and centralization, explicitly in the name of that which is described, dismissively, as "provincial, parochial, isolationist." Not only does he not object to being called an isolationist, he embraces the term and proclaims it more American than foreign meddling. He states his position bluntly: "Just because Bush, Rush, and Fox are ignorant of history doesn't mean authentic conservatives have to swallow the profoundly un-American American Empire."<sup>7</sup> He is also precise about what he means by "authentic conservatives": "anti-expansion, pro-particularism... cherishing of the verities of home, hearth,

and family..."<sup>8</sup> and "rooted, home-centered, mindful of the holiness of small things."<sup>9</sup> What is at stake, what is to be gained, and what, at great cost, there is to lose, is made clear in a choice with which Kauffman challenges his readers. "You can have your hometown or you can have the empire. You can't have both."<sup>10</sup> He then provides numerous examples of people who have had the strength and courage to choose their families, hometowns, states, and regions instead of the empire, and what has become of them and the traditions of which they were a part and for which they spoke.

Kauffman's great strength as a writer, and what makes his books both accessible and a joy to read, are the profiles he writes of the often contrary, cantankerous, and contradictory<sup>11</sup> progenitors of the tradition he so deftly traces. These "insubordinate Americans," as Robert Frost called them, range from Jack Kerouac to Wendell Berry, John McClaughry to Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Dorothy Day to Edward Abbey, Paul Goodman to Russell Kirk, Gore Vidal to Patrick J. Buchanan, and a great many more besides. What, one would be forgiven asking, do all of these people have in common? What *could* they have in common? The plain truth is many of these people would not be able to stand being in the same room together. As Kauffman says, though, we are talking about a "vigorous, contentious, spirited lot, averse to orthodoxy and witchhunts," but not averse to dust-ups and family squabbles.<sup>12</sup> One thing about which he is clear is that "Left" and "Right" are no longer (if they ever were!) useful terms for describing the traditions of Jeffersonian agrarianism, decentralism, individualism, self-reliance, and libertarianism with which Kauffman concerns himself, and offers the following "note... on taxonomy":

"To label is to libel, or at least to divest the subject of individuating contradictions and qualifications. I have found that the most interesting American political figures can-

-not be squeezed into the constricted and lifeless pens of *liberal* or *conservative*. Nor do I accept the simpleminded division of our lovely and variegated country into *red* and *blue*, for to paint Colorado, Kansas, and Alabama requires every color in the spectrum. *Right* and *Left* have outlived their usefulness as taxonomic distinctions. They're closer to prisons from which no thought can escape."<sup>13</sup>

The more fundamental split, the one that defines the commonality of the thinkers and writers listed above, is the question of progress, which is to say, they are against it, considering it fraud or idolatry:

"Progress was the idol of the cohort that gave us urban renewal and IBM and regarded long hair and pot smoking and Jefferson Airplane as sinful but sending your sons halfway around the globe to die for Robert McNamara as a supreme act of patriotism. It was the whole Baal-game of the generation that gulped down every last ounce of whatever snake oil was on sale, as long as it promised Profit and a More Abundant Future."<sup>14</sup>

Empty promises aside, what has been delivered is the destruction of generations and the evisceration of families, homes, and communities. And, lest we fall under the spell of progress and allow ourselves to believe one of its fundamental myths, we must remember that this was not inevitable. This "modern derangement" which we are all experiencing or suffering, was located by Paul Goodman in "TV, mass higher schooling, the complex of cars, roads, and suburbanization, mass air travel, the complex of plantations, chain grocers, and forced urbanization; not to speak of the meteoric rise of the military industries and the



Vietnam war and the draft."<sup>15</sup>

This process has only continued, indeed, it has been amplified, and it is necessary that we face it, recognize it, recognize our own culpability in its spread. The American people are now a subject class, the sullen residents of a "conquered province," to paraphrase Goodman, who are "cajoled, flattered, stimulated," but never respected, by those who rule them. When Norman Mailer ran for mayor of New York City in 1969, he saw the problem clearly, and identified it:

"Our authority has been handed over to the federal power. We expect our economic solutions, our habitats, yes, even our entertainments, to derive from that remote abstract power, remote as the other end of a television tube. We are like wards in an orphan asylum. The shaping of the style of our lives is removed from us—we pay for huge military adventures and social experiments so separated from our direct control that we do not even know where to begin to criticize... So our condition is spiritless. We wait for abstract impersonal powers to save us, we despise the abstractness of those powers, we loathe ourselves for our own apathy."<sup>16</sup>

And is it not interesting how rarely we hear the word "citizen" anymore? No, we are now "consumers" and "taxpayers," first and foremost, economic designations to denote an economic role. Beyond that, we count for little. Wendell Berry said it well:

When they want you to buy something they will call you. When they want you to die for profit they will let you know.<sup>17</sup>

In the end, as Kauffman repeatedly asserts, it is *love alone* that will save us. "I would rather

practice an anarchy based on love than preach a sterile liberty."<sup>18</sup> But, it must be love that is rooted in the reality of lives shared in the place one calls home. For, how capacious can love be before it loses any sense of proportion and focus, and in doing so, lose its transformative power? Should we not rather strive to love a few people well, than love a great many people poorly? As Wendell Berry has wisely cautioned,

My love must be discriminate or fail to bear its weight.<sup>19</sup>

We would also do well to recall Emerson's admonishment, "Thy love afar is spite at home."<sup>20</sup> Love, like patriotism, to paraphrase Henry James, begins at home.<sup>21</sup> The "reach of love," as Kauffman says in his discussion of Wendell Berry in *Look Homeward America*, must, of necessity, not extend too far from home, but must be rooted in the conviction that "[t]here is no 'better place' than this, not in this world."<sup>22</sup> This conviction is the only secure footing for any kind of struggle on behalf of *the good, the true, and the beautiful*.<sup>23</sup> "Like charity, dissent begins at home—with a home."<sup>24</sup>

Not for Kauffman the life of the uprooted, nomadic "activist"—truly just the flipside of the "'upwardly mobile transients' who wage war upon our places"<sup>25</sup>—who, being from "no place" have no place to love, and therefore to defend. "The life of the professional protester, the chronic placard-carrier and slogan-shouter, is desiccated and desolate," says Kauffman, and then he quotes Berry, "'The political activist *sacrifices* himself to politics."<sup>26</sup> Far better to create a healthy life from which a healthy politics might flow, a politics that would be close to home and to the people we love. But, for the professional activist, fighting the state on its own ground and with the tactics it has perfected, is left rootless in a cold and ugly world, and responds with coldness and ugliness:

uprooted, I have been furious without an aim.<sup>27</sup>

"Behold the anger of the deracinated, who know what they hate but not what they love..." Kauffman sadly, but correctly, observes, and then offers the wise counsel: "To combat nomadism, one must make a home; to combat violence, one must embrace peace, and that peace is more, much more, than the mere absence of war."<sup>28</sup>

And so, we find ourselves back where we began, with Tom Waits' anonymous soldier, wishing for nothing more than to be home with the people he loves, and knowing full well that he is fighting not for them, or for the high ideals spoken of by politicians:

I'm not fighting for justice  
I am not fighting for freedom  
I am fighting for my life and  
Another day in the world here  
I just do what I've been told  
We're just the gravel on the road  
And only the lucky ones come  
Home, on the day after tomorrow

But there is something more, some words of wisdom relevant to everything we have discussed in this review:

And I know we too are made  
Of all the things that we have  
Lost here...



*"Midwest Past Time"*



Kauffman would understand and agree. After all, did he not lay the challenge before us, and tell us that we must choose between our hometowns and the empire, between fighting for what we love and fighting the empire's far-flung wars? For we will be made of all the things we have lost, as the unnamed soldier warns. In the four books discussed in this review, as well as his numerous other writings, Bill Kauffman has made the case for the "Little Way," the way, as Dorothy Day called it, of love.

We would do well to listen. ■

*Cathal Liam McFee is a Catholic, anarchist, and a science fiction writer living in Bloomington, Indiana. He dedicates this essay to Lara, who first showed him some of these words; and to Greg and Carrie, who have always been willing to listen.*

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- 1 *Look Homeward, America*, 95.
  - 2 *Dispatches from the Muckdog Gazette*, 16; further on, Kauffman describes it as an act of "municipal suicide," (19), driven, as always, by the worship of progress and a desire for "modern ideals" (17). Having stated such lofty goals, all opposition could be dismissed as reactionary and nostalgic.
  - 3 Kauffman discusses this issue in the splendidly-titled chapter "Wendell Berry on War and Peace; Or, Port William Versus the Empire," in *Look Homeward, America*. As is all-too- often the case, this issue receives a perfunctory and typically shallow treatment in the media in the US, with reference to "fly-over country," and the cheap culture war rhetoric of playing the "wholesome" Midwest against the decadent and immoral coasts. But, this is not simply a matter of geography, it is more a matter of geography versus no geography.
  - 4 *Dispatches from the Muckdog Gazette*, 14.
  - 5 *Look Homeward, America*, 39.
  - 6 *Dispatches from the Muckdog Gazette*, 34.
  - 7 *Ain't My America*, 2.
  - 8 *Ain't My America*, 3.
  - 9 *Look Homeward, America*, 110.
  - 10 *Ain't My America*, 10.

- 11 Contradictory in the Whitmanesque sense:

Do I contradict myself?  
Very well I contradict myself,  
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)  
-Song of Myself, 48

This is in keeping with the Emersonian dictum that "[a] foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds...". Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance," *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. New York: Modern Library.

- 12 *America First!*, 17. Kauffman, himself, is quite aware of how these family squabbles occur, and is frank about his own "wanderings": "from the populist flank of liberalism to the agrarian wing of Don't Tread on Me libertarianism to the peace-and-love left wing of paleoconservatism..." finally ending up as a "Jeffersonian. An anarchist. A (cheerful!) enemy of the state, a reactionary Friend of the Library...". *Look Homeward, America*, xvii.
- 13 *Ain't My America*, 2. Elsewhere, Kauffman refers to "the compleat anarchist: the perfect harmonizing of the best features of 'left' and 'right.'" *Look Homeward, America*, 36.
- 14 *Dispatches from the Muckdog Gazette*, 17.
- 15 Goodman, *New Reformation: Notes of a Neolithic Conservative*, (no page #), quoted in *Look Homeward, America*, 102.

Coming from a somewhat different tradition--- though, perhaps not---is the English poet and critic John Betjeman, who observed:

We accept without murmur the poles and wires with which the Ministry of Fuel and Power has strangled every village, because they bring electric light and telephones to those who have been without these inestimable benefits. We put up with the foully hideous concrete lamp-standards for which the Borough Engineer and the Ministry of Transport are jointly responsible--each playing off the other---because the corpse-light they spew over road and pavement makes it safer for kiddies to cross and easier for lorries to overtake one another round dangerous corners. We slice off old buildings, fell healthy trees, replace hedges with concrete posts

and chain-link fencing, all in the name of "safety first" which is another phrase for "hurry past." "Love Is Dead," in *First and Last Loves*, 2.

Elsewhere, Betjeman had expressed his frustration with "progress" by calling for "friendly bombs" to "fall on Slough," because "it isn't fit for humans now/There isn't grass to graze a cow." But, lest he, and many of these other thinkers, be misunderstood, he is not calling for the destruction of humanity. He is not a misanthrope. He is calling for the destruction of the false world of air-conditioned rooms, stale conversation, tinned food, and tinned minds.

- 16 *Dispatches from the Muckdog Gazette*, 53-54.
- 17 "Manifesto: Mad Farmer Liberation Front."
- 18 *Dispatches from the Muckdog Gazette*, 30.
- 19 Berry, "The Mad Farmer Manifesto: The First Amendment," quoted in *Look Homeward, America*, 107.
- 20 Emerson, "Self-Reliance." Emerson was speaking of charity, and the ease with which one could love people who are far away, and donate a sum of money to their care, whilst neither knowing nor caring about the fate of his own neighbors. Emerson's view on charity is central to our larger argument: "I tell thee thou foolish philanthropist that I grudge the dollar, the dime, the cent I give to such men as do not belong to me and to whom I do not belong. There is a class of persons to whom by all spiritual affinity I am bought and sold; for them I will go to prison if need be..."
- 21 *Dispatches from the Muckdog Gazette*, 60.
- 22 Berry, *A Place On Earth* (no page #), quoted in *Look Homeward, America*, 92.
- 23 I believe it was Camus who said, after all, we only fight for what we love.
- 24 *Look Homeward, America*, 105.
- 25 *Look Homeward, America*, 107.
- 26 Berry, "Some Thoughts on Citizenship and Conscience in Honor of Don Pratt" (no page #), quoted in *Look Homeward, America*, 104.
- 27 Berry, "A Standing Ground," quoted in *Look Homeward, America*, 104.
- 28 *Look Homeward, America*, 104.

## Darkness Envelops

Rafael Miguel

In the light my flesh seems too familiar;  
It is my mother's flesh, not mine,  
My father's too, and only sometimes mine...  
In the darkness, where I eat my sound, my  
strangeness,  
Forget my mould.  
The urn twists and turns to shape my curves,  
The way the muscles on my arm bend like  
distant hills.  
Darkness envelop me.  
Oxygen enter me. Dioxide leave me.  
  
somethingness free me.  
In the light I am burned with identity.

## HOMEWORK

1. TURN OFF YOUR TELEVISION FOR ONE WEEKEND.
2. START OR JOIN A SUPPER CLUB OR DISCUSSION GROUP.
3. INVEST YOUR MONEY IN A LOCAL ZINE. IF NONE ARE AVAILABLE, FIND ONE ONLINE.
4. BAKE A LOAF OF BREAD INSTEAD OF BUYING ONE FROM THE SUPERMARKET.
5. RANDOMLY PICK AND PURCHASE AN ALBUM BY A LOCAL BAND. GIVE THEM FEEDBACK, IF POSSIBLE.
6. THROW OUT YOUR POLITICALLY CORRECT CHILDRENS BOOKS AND TRY READING THEM SOME OF THE CLASSICS.



# The Death of Radio

Part 1 of 3

Dr. Jeff Higgason

*\*\*Author's Note: The following story is one I have told a least two-thousand times during times of drunken loudness whenever I was lucky enough to catch the attention of some poor soul I had cornered. This is my first shot at actually writing it down. This is in essence the very story of my life so you can consider it a very personal message to those who take the time to read it. Of course I will change names wherever I find it appropriate to keep myself from any kind of legal backlash from former employers. This is the story of the death of a national icon. Reporting to LIVE from the scene of the death of radio.—Dr. Higgason 10.30.2008. \*\**

## The Rats Are in the Trash

One summer, when I was 16, I was savagely attacked by a rat while scrubbing the concrete around the bottom of the grease catcher while working the night shift at the local McArches. That's right; I made your burgers, fries, and all that good stuff. I might have actually caused you a heart attack, and for that I apologize. We had an important inspection coming up in the morning, and everything had to be spotless—they even had a running patrol workin' the parking lot.

All of this frenzy seemed to stem from fear. Fear of being lashed in front of the crew by the immediate captains of "the corporation." So, being in a panicked state of mind, and also to up the cleanliness bar, my stupid ass was sent outside to sweep and hose out the dumpster area and then clean off the excess grease from the base of that huge vomit bucket. I bent down, armed with my scrub brush teeming with this degreaser solution that would burn your hands if you came in contact with it in its concentrated state, and in a terror I see

two little beady eyes looking at me with a scowl. I stepped back in a startle and the loathsome varmint charged at me. With a couple of rapid thrusts of the huge scrub brush, I caught him on the second shot with a pop fly over the concrete wall. I went back inside and announced that I had "just taken on a rat." I was hushed and rushed to the back of the building. I was informed that it was, 1) bad manners to loudly scream that there was a possible pissed off rat on the premises, and 2) that the restaurant receives a new batch of vermin with every truck load. "The Corporation" knows about it; it's something we can't help.

Yeah, I know it's a little hard to handle a story like that. I am afraid if I embellished even more I could face some sort of legal action by the company. There are dirty dark secrets masked in the mass-produced burger. That rat taught me a lesson: the truth is always hidden—like a rat waiting in the garbage.

In early October 1995, the father of a friend tapped me on the shoulder and he explained there was a job open at our local FM station. All I had to do was mention his name in the interview and it was a sure thing, so I hung up my apron and gave up my thriving fast food career to join another cookie cutter industry. This is my tale.

The night of Friday, October 13, 1995 was the first time I worked at our local radio station, WNOI-FM, in my small Illinois hometown. The girl I was to replace was leaving after that weekend, and I was schooled in the fine routine of programming in a matter of 2 and half days. My main job was to run commercials. I was rarely expected to play live music and was warned, if I did have to spin songs live, that "this isn't Nine Inch Nails country."

I understood.

I ran commercials through NASCAR broadcasts, during local sporting events, and during remote broadcasts. Of course I got to read the news and the weather live. I had to come in before dawn every Sunday to start "Heaven's Jubilee," which began at 6 AM. "Heaven's Jubilee" was a cheaply produced syndicate gospel program featuring the always vivacious host Jim Loudermilk. At certain spots during the program ol' Jim would try to sell a buffet of products made from beeswax or aluminum free underarm deodorant. In other words, BUY MY SNAKE OIL!

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*...after being ran through the cartridge player for 20 years and then used again the tape inside became worn and thin, resulting in carts that hissed or sounded like a warped record. I hated those goddamn things.*

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The rest of the shift included live news and obituaries at 7:05 AM and cut-ins for weather forecasts, or announcements for the next program. The Sunday shift was a drag during the NASCAR season because I couldn't leave until the race was over. During one particular Coca Cola 600 I had to stay until well past midnight. The race had entered a rain delay and was five laps short of half way. In order to make the race "official" it had to be run until midway. Finally around 11:30 that night, it stopped raining and the cars hit the raceway, making me a witness to the fastest five laps in NASCAR history. When I look back and remember all the Saturday nights that I eschewed my friends and parties so that I could be up early for the Sunday swing, all I really see is a schmuck.

When I started at WNOI-FM all of our pre-recorded programming (commercials and news and weather music) were played off these horrible things called *carts*, short for "cartridge." They were

based on the same principal of the 8 track-cassette. Most of the carts were over 20 years old; it was the ultimate recycling program. You recorded on one of these things and when the commercial spot had expired you erased the tape and recorded on it again. The problem was that after being ran through the cartridge player for 20 years and then used again the tape inside became worn and thin, resulting in carts that hissed or sounded like a warped record. I hated those goddamn things. The studio console was a very simple set up—there were 3 CD players, 2 cassette decks, two turntables and a microphone. A majority of the music I played came off of 45 rpm records.

"And coming up next we have The Cutting Crew..."

The first thing they taught me was how to cue up a record. It was easy: find the beginning of the song, pull the record a quarter turn around the opposite way and BOOM you hit the remote start on the broadcast console and you are "Sailing with Christopher Cross."

It was a very frustrating gig at first. I mean, on the surface it was a very different job than what most of my friends worked. It was a public job, the type of job where the community can talk an awful mess about you. I know because my father was very vocal when it came to crap on the radio. When I did my first live newscast it was downright embarrassing. I recently found a tape of that newscast and it will go to the grave with me. All the things that appear natural in a basic air-shifter's on-air personality came later, and within the first couple of month's I loved coming in for my shift. Around Christmastime we had a ton of holiday commercials to play, so I was allowed to run a "full" shift, meaning I was on the air live for about 4 to 6 hours playing songs, running holiday commercials, and giving the weather.

It was a very taxing job. The first early Sunday shift I did was the morning after a school



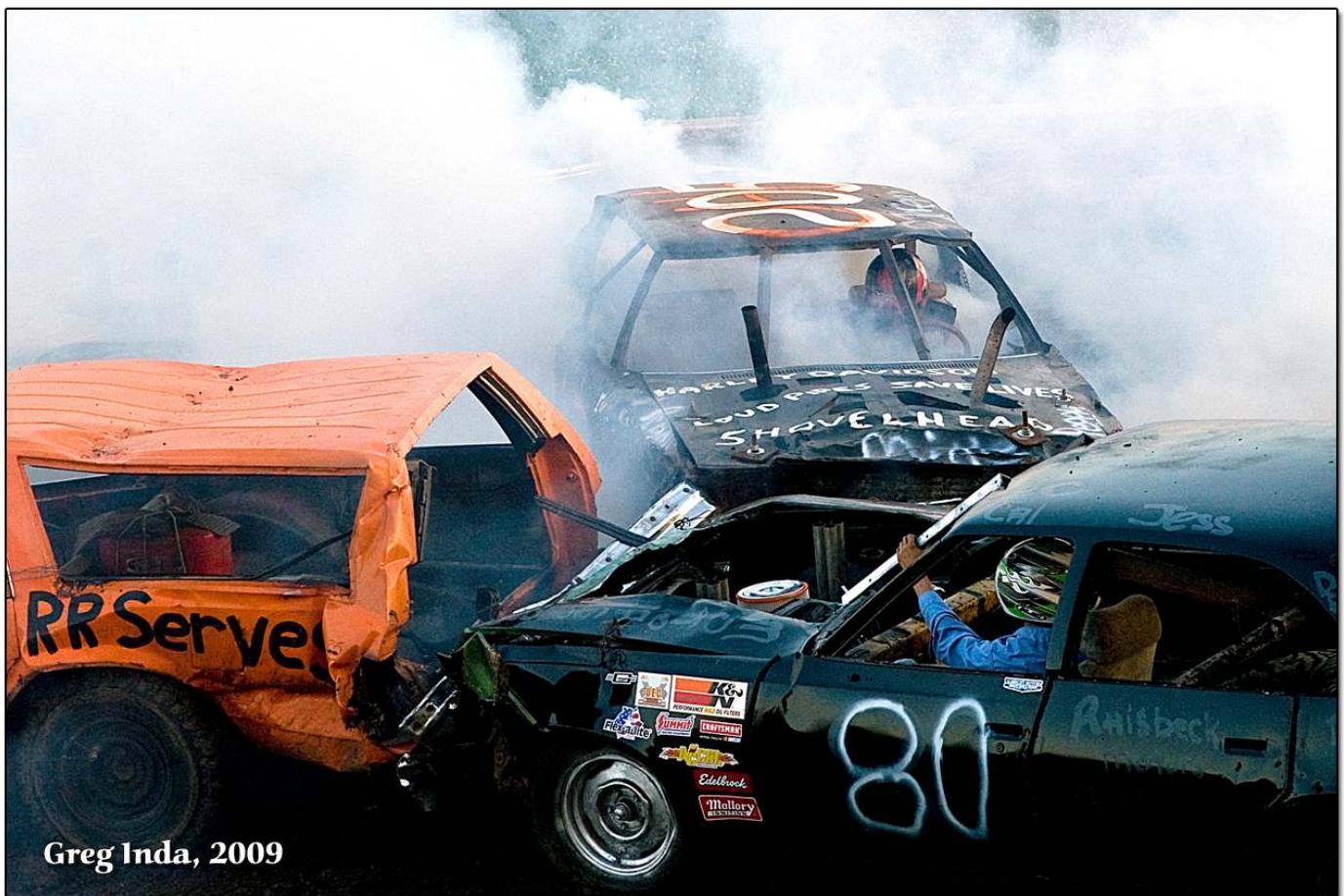
dance, so socially I was tethered to the station. If a bad snow came along and forced the schools to shutdown I was expected at the radio station to read all of the closings and cancellations that were called in to our office, and believe me, those lists were huge ongoing tasks. There was no sledding and playing in the snow with girls, drinking Zima, and an occasional finger bang for Higgason. I was a savage company man at 16-years-old. Because all of the area churches would have to call in service cancellations if the snow hit on a Wednesday night or a Sunday morning, and with all the kids calling in asking about school closings, winter was a very stressful time.

"You annoying bastards...  
I just read that on the air!"

### The Platinum Rollercoaster

After about a year working at WNOI-FM I sold the station manager on having my own show. He stipulated that in order to get the show I would have to sell it to the sponsors. We sold over a hundred dollars worth of sponsorships within the first hour.

The show became the "Platinum Rollercoaster." We had a contest to name the show, and that was the best the audience could come up with. It was a mixed format music program. I handled the alternative rock side and my buddy Aaron covered the hip hop side. It was fun. I still say that we were the first to play a lot of hip hop hits before they hit, namely, "No Diggity" by Blackstreet and "Da Dip" by Freak Nasty. We were



Greg Inda, 2009

"Demolition Derby"

ahead of our time, but only by about 25 minutes.

We had some wonderful guests. The Olney, Illinois punk legends Toucan Slam graced our show with a performance once, as well as "The Schugars" all the way from Detroit, Michigan. We also interviewed royalty. One night the Clay County Fair Queen came on the show and we got her to name all of the "nicknames" she had for her vagina, my favorite being "the bunny hole." We had another female guest that tied red Twizzlers into knots with her tongue in order to win a free tanning certificate. When we did a spoof on the local cops, we played the "Bad Boys" theme music. Out of all that, we were reprimanded for the jokes about the police.

After a time, my co-host and I started to get a good listenership. We received free CDs and T-shirts and posters and concert passes. We had a deal worked out with Mississippi Nights in St. Louis to get passes to shows to give away. We sent people to see Helmet, Silverchair, and Rancid. We gave out hundreds of free CDs and stickers. We learned early that listeners liked free stuff!

When the new Burger King opened we did a bit where we would call up the manager of McDonalds and tell them we were starting a pool about when the "burger wars" were going to start. I asked if there was any truth to the rumors that McDonald's employees were going show up incognito at the Burger King drive through window and hurl bagfuls of putrid McDonald hamburgers into the restaurant. We added variety to the local airwaves and our audience was in the age range of 15 to 21. It was a rare opportunity to listen to a group of local goof-offs act like idiots in full range stereo signal.

As all good things do, the show peaked and the sales staff blatantly robbed all of my sponsors and put them onto a local oldies show. It wasn't very long before I was offered a better job.

WFIW-AM/FM – WOKZ-FM is located just east of the metroplex of the town of Fairfield, Illinois. WFIW was a revered station due to their razor-sharp take on local news events and their very

popular "Morning Show with Woody and Murvis." The station manager called me under the recommendation of one of my professors at the college I was attending. WFIW was my first look at the inner workings of a very professional local radio station and its many lovable characters. WFIW was the only station where I absolutely adored all my co-workers. There were the morning guys, my boss Dave, and my best dude in the world, Marilyn. It was a very WKRP atmosphere and it was like home. I got a hell of a lot more air time.

I had two regular shifts on weeknights and a regular Saturday morning shift on the AM station. I got to run music, gab, and situate the AM station to simulcast with the FM station at noon. I learned radio at WFIW and recall many fond memories of the place. That is where I perfected my radio voice. There are multitudes of radio voices. You have guys that are hyper, like a little dog about to piss on your shoe; the guys that have the nice, deep rumbling voice; the raspy crowd; and the obligatory radio voice. Me, I try to talk sexy, like Billy Dee Williams, when I read the news. What can I say? I learned a lot from Barry White growing up. I was very precise on punctuation and lost my Southern Illinois drawl.

Exciting things happened around the Fairfield area and there was rarely a dry news day. The news director, Len Wells, could get information most other area stations weren't even privy too. The station prided itself on total local coverage, and they gave the listeners pounds of it. That was the man that taught me about news.

One fine Spring night I was loafin' around a bit waiting for my next newscast to come up at the top of the hour, and then the phone rang. It was a reporter from an Evansville, Indiana TV station wanting some information about "the killing spree." I told him I had no idea what he was talking about and I would have to get back with him. I phoned up Wells at home and he said he would monitor the police scanner. After about ten minutes he showed up at the station, grabbed the mobile phone pack,



and told me he was “going to follow the police around.” All evening he called in little reports from “out in the field.”

With each report the details got gorier than in the last. The radio station was located about two miles east of the town of Fairfield and was very remote, to say the least. The story was that these two meth heads started killing people in Indiana earlier that day and had made their way into the eastern edge of Illinois. According to these phoned in reports from Wells, the manhunt was basically concentrated in the area of the radio station and about 4 miles southeast. That put these desperate, crazy, and cranked up murderers in my neck of the woods.

I locked all the doors and hunkered down with a corkscrew I found. About 10:30 that night there was a banging on the front door. I thought to myself, “Dammit! They’re here. I knew it,” but it turned out to be the local fuzz. I had never been so happy to see a policeman in my life. They said they were out to check on me and they would be about a mile west up the highway.

Early the next morning I was making the curves to Mt. Carmel for classes and I heard the whole story. After a search that had lasted the night, a nightscope spotted the two fugitives hiding in a large field. When the police arrived on the scene, they discovered that one of the suspects was dead from a single gunshot wound to the back of the head.

This story stretched out for several newscasts. The police charged the remaining suspect with the murder of his accomplice. According to the suspect, he shot his accomplice in hopes of ending the fracas, but what he failed to realize was that after you and your friend leave a wake of murders across two states the opportunity for heroism has already passed. The trial itself became hopelessly tabloid. I believe, eventually, the trial venue was switched to Jefferson County because of too much pre-trial publicity, and the man was given the long ride at one of Illinois’ prisons.

In my first run at WFIW I was witness to two more such incidents. One where a woman had stabbed her husband to death on a rural Wayne County road and the other was a horrible story about a young man in western Richland County who hacked his family to death in their home. First rule in broadcast journalism: “If it bleeds, it leads.” The first time I was told this little nugget, I was horrified. But the sad certainty is that the public craves the naughty little details—dignity be damned.

So after about a year and a half of working the boards and phones at WFIW I started looking around for a change of scenery and an excuse to go back to college. In the spring of 1999, I enrolled at Vincennes University in Vincennes, Indiana and signed up for a major in broadcasting. After weeks of sweating it out, I was able to find a job at the Vincennes radio station. I took my application to the business office at the top floor of the Executive Inn. I thought it was cool that we broadcast from high atop the once grandest hotel in Vincennes, and there was a strong chance of fresh pastries on Sunday morning. ■

*Dr. Jeff Higgason is a radio enthusiast and the brain behind the Olney Free Radio Project. He hopes to open up the airwaves to a wider variety of local voices.*

# Elton Trueblood and the Spectre of Barnaby Ransome

Frank Palmer Purcell

**This is yet another story about how a** student political activist of the '60s and '70s Saw the Light. It is the cautionary tale of how the Senior Co-Chair of the Edmund Burke Society (Conservative Club) of minuscule Earlham College (but there are those that love her, as Webster said of Dartmouth) enlisted in the Effete Army of Impudent Snobs and marched against the War. Yes, that war. And any other you've got. Including this one.

What did Conservative activists do in the Midwest of the late 1960s? First of all, we met for dinner to discuss books: T. S. Eliot, Tocqueville, Russell Kirk, Richard Weaver, the usual suspects. We sponsored speakers provided by the Intercollegiate Society of Individualists: Eric von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, Frederick Wilhelmsen, Russell Kirk himself, and we collaborated with our friends on the Left to bring in some interesting radicals, like Carl Ogelsby of the New Left, who was not allowed to speak unless followed by a member of the faculty to expose his errors, a circumstance I deplored (we let the Administration provide the smarmy liberals and fervent anti-Communists).

We got to attend some fantastic ISI summer conferences, at one of which the great Ludwig von Mises spoke. I took over the student government, and worked with like-minded faculty and trustees to strengthen, broaden, and deepen the core curriculum, which remained for many years one of the best in the country. Indeed, I was so taken with that project that I started graduate school at Columbia in Teachers College's Department of Higher and Adult Education. We did not agitate in favor of the Vietnam war. In Indiana that wasn't necessary. Besides, in Indiana, given the culture lag, suspicion, even hostility, to foreign involvement in

general and war in particular, was still, for some, a very Conservative sentiment, especially among Quakers, the good folks who gave us Earlham (having discovered Rufus Jones in high school, I was in love with the Society of Friends as they appeared to me from a distance).

I had come from the New Jersey suburbs to Richmond, Indiana, city of roses and cheese-bus bodies, thanks in no small measure to a man with the distinctly Quaker (or Hobbit) name of D. Elton Trueblood. I went to Earlham, among other reasons, because the college catalog communicated a reasonably clear idea of a coherent philosophy of education, expressed in paragraphs snipped from Truebloods' *Idea of a College*. It was said that it had been Elton, as he was known, who reassured a young New Deal bureaucrat named Nixon that the Peace Testimony of the Religious Society of Friends could be safely set aside when there were evils to be fought and careers to be made fighting them. And Elton proved to be quite the culture warrior himself.

Four Brits had appeared on the Ed Sullivan show in February of 1964, and by late the following year the Earlham campus was disfigured by the appearance of a freshman named Alan, crowned with a Beatle mop of hair. The honor of the College was only saved when a gang of stout lads of the athletic persuasion dragged the offender to the football field and tonsured the poor soul—or so Elton explained to the Conservative Club, swelling with pride that students took the initiative when the administration lacked the moral fiber to do their job; the enforcers were evidently his faithful pupils. We were not. Indeed, he had not even offered to act as our faculty sponsor; that honor belonged to a young leftist named Paul Lacey. Alan, on the other hand,



had often served as a waiter for our dinner meetings, and was a welcome participant in our discussions. Elton was not invited back, not in my time at least. Four years later he would tell a shocked Bill Moyers that the student demonstrators shot down at Kent State were a bunch of Commies anyway—that from a bestselling devotional author somewhere between Billy Graham and Norman Vincent Peale, one looked up to with awe by most of those Quakers who still believed in God, some of the latter pacifists.

Why am I taking the time now to revisit the lumber room of memory? For one thing, it needs to be stressed that American Fascism didn't begin with the so-called Neocons in a Jewish revolt against affirmative action and demobilization. It was here all along, among mainstream Protestants, evangelicals who wanted to mainstream themselves, and maverick opportunists, some of whom, I am embarrassed to say, passed for Conservative. But behind the irrational and sadistic resistance to the cultural revolution of the 'sixties was a kind of sexual frenzy and panic. It was understandable, even in Midwestern evangelical Quaker circles that real men, real Americans, would abuse alcohol and use women. But no real American man would ever use marijuana, or engage in unmarried sexual relations of mutual passion and mutual respect. All such licentiousness reeked of anarchy and Africanism, and seemed to be carried by students of Jewish race or East Coast origin.

I knew nothing then of the mixed race tribe of Ben Ishmael, whose annual round in the old Northwest Territory extended from Indianapolis, which may have taken its name from them, to Morocco on the Kankakee and Mahomet, near the present Champaign-Urbana. According to Sufi historian Peter Lamborn Wilson, they served as a kind of inspiration to Noble Drew Ali and the Temple of Moorish Science, from which the somewhat less laid back Nation of Islam later emerged. "Little Orphant Annie" was one of their number; Earlham's Barnaby Parsnip Society was

devoted, more than half in jest, I fear, to the memory of her poet Riley, but I knew her not (Eventually the State of Indiana passed a eugenics law to have these people sterilized, which was an inspiration to Nazi leader Adolf Hitler).

I was aware of the Quaker migration from North Carolina, which fled the propinquity of slaves, in part from an honest detestation of slavery, but perhaps also in part from less speakable fears. I was then unaware of the prominence of Quakers in the Indiana Klan in the 1920s, but I felt the unseen presence of something uncanny and monstrous, something capable of turning good men to evil ways. Indeed, I devoted some weeks to the study of Tillich's *Systematic Theology*, by a man who had known the Nazis and took the demonic seriously. This was, needless to say, before the revolting Exorcist movie trivialized the whole idea beyond rescue. Forget Pazuzu; forget Gozer the Gozerian: Earlham College, the Indiana and Western (Ohio) Yearly Meetings of the Religious Society of Friends, the Red States of America were haunted, haunted I say, and are haunted to this day, by the spectre of Barnaby Parsnip and his Little Orphant:

Wunst they wuz a little boy wouldn't  
say his prayers,--  
An' when he went to bed at night, away  
up-stairs,  
His Mammy heerd him holler, an' his  
Daddy heerd him bawl,  
An' when they turn't the kivvers down,  
he wuzn't there at all!

The moral is well known:  
An' the Gobble-uns 'll git you  
Ef you  
Don't  
Watch  
Out!

The Gobble-uns got a whole generation. Or so it seemed for a while. Did the Gobble-uns "git"

me? And if not, why not? Did they “git” anyone? Hard to say. Hard to say. There were little boys in those days who wouldn't say their prayers, and even some little girls, and when they began to pray it sounded like hollers and bawls to Mammy and Daddy. Good Catholic kids up at Notre Dame were speaking a variety of tongues recognized by the elders of the Assemblies of God, Hindu and Buddhist chants were rising up with the clouds of incense, and some sat so still in zazen that soon they weren't there at all. For some, sex became, not a drunken spasm in the dark, but an act involving consciousness and even affection. As for me, I was perhaps a bit out of it at the time, but it all seemed perfectly natural, a step beyond the sullen, cynical materialism of the mass culture, and often leaving my contemporaries open to what I would call more authentic spirituality. To be sure, many lives were ruined by drugs, at least for a while, but I knew, as we all admit if we are honest, that the worst of drugs is alcohol, one in which I cheerfully indulge (Crack had not yet arrived on the scene).

These were the culture wars, and they are still with us. But we managed to convince ourselves that it was all about Vietnam, about which rational discussion was impossible. I was still Roman Catholic, though raised in a home more than half Protestant, and graduated from public school. I was not particularly devout, but unlike most Catholics I knew, I accepted the principles of Catholic morality, according to which the war was simply wrong. It's not that the Pope stood up at the United Nations and cried out, “No more war,” and the Catholic masses ran out to join the Fellowship of Reconciliation: he did; they didn't. But the Church was the guardian of a tradition of moral reflection on the use of power which had begun in classical antiquity, and to which Protestants—Althusius, Grotius, Pufendorf—had contributed equally, and which Catholics and Protestants in America equally ignored (This willful ignorance goes by the name of Christian Realism, presumably because it is neither).

It may, however, have been despised in the miserable Twentieth Century, the natural law tradition had been meat and drink to the men who set the United States up as an independent nation in 1776 and 1789, and it will be remembered again whenever people who want to be moral honestly face agonizing decisions. According to Natural Law doctrine, this war in Vietnam was wrong because it could not be won without committing war crimes against the civilian population of the ally we were, in theory, protecting from foreign aggression. Could it be otherwise when we had had the leader who requested our assistance overthrown and (inevitably) murdered for not being our mere puppet? Surely this much was obvious, or would have been obvious if our minds hadn't been clouded.

Religion was one of the greatest sources of confusion. I have said that the teachings of the Catholic Church were for me a clear guide to moral action. That's only because I was outside the reach of the pervasive culture of the American Church, which has never really acknowledged the right of the Bishop of Rome to speak moral truth to secular power. As early as World War I the American hierarchy turned their back on Benedict XV's urgent pleas that they approach President Wilson on behalf of a negotiated settlement. They ought to have done so out of compassion if not obedience; after the victorious Allies opened the archives of the Central Powers, it became clear that the Pope had had justice on his side as well. After World War II the American Catholic Church turned a legitimate concern for the hardships of Catholics under Communism into a militaristic crusade against the Russians. Anyone who criticized the most extreme anti-Communism was subject to the most vicious slander by the likes of Joseph McCarthy, and anyone who dared to criticize McCarthy was anathema to the Church.

When Joe McCarthy finally turned on the United States Army and the Protestant Churches as nests of treason his fellow Senators censured him,



and rightly so. But millions of Catholic children in their parochial classrooms were forced to write letters praising the drunken Senator and damning his sober and responsible colleagues. This was not some esoteric matter of disputed questions in just war theory. It was a matter of simple morality, and the bishops, priests, and nuns, with very few exceptions, betrayed their church and their country. Again, why bring this up now? I have heard Catholics complain that the Jewish lobby, out of concern for their brethren in the Middle East, have for a half century used bribery and blackmail to induce our government to betray the national interest, and engaged in vicious character assassination against all who opposed them.

Of course Jews resent this! How could the legitimate interest of any righteous nation differ from that of God's chosen people and their State of Israel? How could anyone but a Nazi question Israel's right to exist within secure borders and to do anything necessary to secure them? Catholics, too, resented all opposition to their own postwar politics, however questionable. How could America keep God's blessings by making any accommodation with the enslavers of Eastern Europe, China, and Vietnam? How could anyone but a Communist or sympathizer urge surrender? The Conservative answer, which is, I think, the answer of Orthodox Judaism as well as the Catholic Natural Law tradition so well articulated by Edmund Burke, is that there are severe and often tragic limits on what any nation, including the United States, can do, and, especially, may do and must do, to foster the good and restrain and punish the evil. Good intentions are no excuse for wrong or even immoderate action. All nations, even those specially chosen by God, and perhaps those especially, are under the judgment.

The Quakers of Earlham, though many of them were of Eastern origin, were by no means unanimously pacifist, and a goodly number of speakers at the required convocations expatiated on the Red Menace: Walter Judd comes to mind.

Nevertheless, the more fanatical strains of militarism were absent. There was thus some context for the traditional Catholic understanding that even war is subject to moral critique, not only in terms of its objectives, but in terms of its means, and the proportionality of means to ends, a critique which the conduct of the Vietnam War by the Johnson administration couldn't sustain. There were, I must in candor admit, a certain number of radicals, too, who spoke the language of class warfare and American imperialism which had

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*The Conservative answer... is that there are severe and often tragic limits on what any nation, including the United States, can do... to foster the good and restrain and punish the evil. Good intentions are no excuse for wrong or even immoderate action. All nations, even those specially chosen by God, and perhaps those especially, are under the judgment.*

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begun to infect the academic mainstream. But these students were as often as not, the children, grandchildren, and even great-grandchildren of radicals. Their ideology was no adolescent Oedipal rebellion, but a faithful enactment of the second Commandment, and to those of us who saw things differently they were almost always civil and frequently cordial, though a certain edge of humorous provocation could easily be taken the wrong way. When I read today's impassioned fulminations against the radicals of the sixties, often by apostates from their ranks, I can only shake my head sadly, not recognizing any of the portraits. Then again, I was pretty much out of the mainstream, as most folks were, and better off for it.

Elton Trueblood retired after my freshman year, and I met my first real philosopher, Frederick "Fritz" Wilhelmsen, flamboyant Carlist metaphysician of love, at the ISI summer school at Bard. Wilhelmsen had just begun *Triumph*, notorious as a monthly journal of the far Right, but

sympathetic not only to the emerging Black Power movement, but to Catholic dissent against the utterly immoral nuclear strategy of Mutual Assured Destruction. At Earlham, Trueblood was replaced by Robert L. Horn, a Kierkegaard scholar from Union Seminary who had been Elton's student twenty years before. Bob would become my own mentor, and would bring in Neoplatonist Dick Wood and Dick's friend Vincent Potter. The latter, a Jesuit, would be the closest thing I had to a spiritual director, and would informally guide my graduate studies in the intellectual biography of Charles Sanders Peirce, the subject of his own dissertation.

I am still in the marriage Father Vinnie concelebrated, and I have recently met up with *Triumph* columnist Lorenzo Albacete, then a young astrophysicist, now a Monsignor and American coordinator of the ecclesiastical movement Communion and Liberation. And when I finally left the Roman Catholic Church it was not for the Religious Society of Friends, which didn't want me in the first place, but for the Russian Catholic Church *sui juris* (don't ask) and with the blessing of Rear Admiral Archbishop John Joseph, Cardinal O'Connor, of blessed memory (my pastor in the Russian Church turns out to be another student of Potter's).

At his retirement, Elton Trueblood was named Professor at Large, with his teaching confined to the seminary—yes, a Quaker seminary, a breathtakingly bad idea, Elton's own, and a failure from the first because the kind of Quakers who have ministers wanted nothing to do with a college where the biology department taught evolution. He was even permitted to destroy the architectural integrity of the front campus by building his house there, a suburban monstrosity which looked like it had been airlifted from Upper Saddle River. His crushing defeat came in the wake of the Cambodian incursion of 1970, when the College, the only one in America where Mr. Nixon thought he would be well received, withdrew its commencement invitation to him. It was Bob Horn who had the

unpleasant task of approaching President Landrum Bolling (another Hobbit name) with the sense of the community that this would be necessary.

It would have been inhuman for Elton not to anticipate the triumph of introducing the man who referred to him as his spiritual counselor, the President of the United States. It would have almost made up for his shabby treatment (as it surely appeared) by the college he had made famous, and the philosophy department he had led. If only those Communist agitators hadn't gotten themselves killed over there in Ohio! No wonder Trueblood was a bitter man when Moyers turned up to interview him. It is perhaps to his credit that his remark didn't appear in the book version of the interview, whether he removed it on his own initiative, or was persuaded to do so. D. Elton Trueblood slipped slowly into the senility of which he had been so often unfairly accused, and when he was moved to a supervised setting his wretched house was, thank God, torn down.

D. Elton Trueblood's final legacy was a remarkable little book: *Abraham Lincoln, Theologian of American Anguish* (1973), written as his hunted and haunted Quaker President stalked the White House communing with the ghost of Father Abraham, and now on line at the Evangelical Christian Library, though neither the author nor the subject could be rightly called an Evangelical Christian. I admit it seems scandalous, nay, ludicrous, for Mr. Nixon, or Mr. Bush, for that matter, to have identified himself so closely with the Great Emancipator, but some scholars today are finding it scandalous if not ludicrous that Lincoln himself was a scheming subversive of Nixonian magnitude, though for most historians his goal, the preservation of Union come what may, was worth any sacrifice—civil liberty, the Constitution of the United States, the laws of war, and human lives beyond counting. But Nixon's mission was, in his own mind, similarly lofty.

In the end, as Belloc wrote of Cranmer, the so-called judgment of history is in some cases



mainly a matter of style, so that the sheer beauty and profundity of the second Inaugural makes all its tendentiousness seem irrelevant. Perhaps. But perhaps Lincoln is best read as the prophet of a new American religion, of which Nixon and Bush are high priests and the Stanford Straussians humble acolytes, a religion equally alien to the Gospel of Christ and the Enlightenment faith of the fathers of 1776 and 1789. Perhaps.

We have it from Mr. Lincoln's law partner that the future president's whole philosophy of life was shaped by a book he found in the bottom of a barrel of nails: not Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, but Ludwig Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*. It is perhaps not too fanciful to surmise that Honest Orphant Abie wouldn't say his prayers either, and the Gobble-uns got 'im, and a great many others, North and South, wuzn't there anymore. After a certain point the railroad lawyer and Whig politician, like Karl Marx before him, moved from the Hegelian Left to the Hegelian Right, and began to see himself as the passive agent of a Destiny beyond human reckoning and the traditional moral limits of human action, to believe that God had called him to wield absolute power to an extent foreign despots could only dream of. The question is, what God?

Lincoln was a religious man, and could say with truth (and lawyerly precision) that he had never spoken a word against religion in general, or any denomination in particular. He had, it is believed, written and printed a book, or at least a tract, attacking the Christian faith, but not any other religion—not Islam or Buddhism—nor did he single out any one church for his scorn; and besides, he thought better of distributing the screed, and no copy survives. He evidently believed, in Straussian fashion, that the superstitions of the masses are best left undisturbed by the statesman who himself takes more enlightened views. "The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present," he assured a Congress from which the rebels had departed. "The occasion is piled high with

difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country." So much the worse for Conservatism.

The Conservative, at least the American Conservative, believes that the purpose of government is to protect the lives, liberties, property, and legitimate interests of its people. The Nationalist believes that government has a higher calling, to fulfill the historic destiny Providence has assigned it. The people and all that belong to them are to be placed at the disposal of government as needed to achieve this high calling. Anyone called to the service of this destiny is not subject to the moral constraints that would bind him as a private person; indeed a Lincoln, a Nixon, or a Bush would fear the just wrath of the God who assigned that task if he allowed such scruple to interfere with the performance of his high calling. In this religion of Nationalism the people are called to serve the nation, and those who dissent are rebels, traitors, and outlaws.

It shocked me profoundly that so many of my countrymen saw the students shot down at Kent in this light. It was not so much that a bunch of young, badly trained weekend warriors panicked under pressure, as this sort of sad thing can happen. It was that such a large number of folks, like poor Elton, implied that it was too bad for their parents, but the kids had it coming. Such might be the logic of such Weimar Republic rightists as Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss, but it was profoundly alien to the spirit of America as I had grown up to understand that spirit, and to the Conservatism articulated by Edmund Burke and celebrated by Russell Kirk. It was, as that other Weimar prophet Eric Voegelin would put it, Gnostic to the point of Manichaeism. When World War II hero George McGovern cried out, "Come home, America," I was happy to give him my first presidential vote—but where were my countrymen? The Gobble-uns must have got 'em, cuz they wuzn't there at all.

Being at Teachers College, I blamed the American system of public education for conditioning a generation to accept complacently the massacre of allied civilians and the beating and shooting of domestic dissenters. This was the same cynical abandonment of morals and worship of brute force that brought all too many of my own contemporaries to defend Chairman Mao's Great Cultural Revolution, and to celebrate, publicly and deliriously, the fall of Phnom Penh to the unspeakable Pol Pot and the shameful abandonment of our allies in Saigon. And it would lead so many younger still to worship the Israeli war machine, which seemed to progress from triumph to triumph as America stumbled from defeat to defeat. The Gobble-uns got them all.

Sometimes it seemed that my one accomplishment as a student activist at Columbia—apart from beginning course evaluations (remember, our graduate students were themselves veteran teachers), a student journal, and student participation in departmental governance—was to invite Ivan Illich to address an audience in the Horace Mann Auditorium on public schooling as totalitarian indoctrination. Subsequent years of teaching for the Board of Education, often under administrators who, even as late as the 1980s, did not deign to disguise their admiration of Stalin, made me revere Father Ivan's memory more and more. Whatever his relations with Mother Church, he said his prayers at night and knew the Gobble-uns when he saw them. Columbia's professorial myrmidons of the Old Left never forgave me, and I must admit I am still rather proud of that.

I had participated in only one massive antiwar demonstration in New York, marching from the Upper West Side to Times Square in a miserable rain that caused the paint on the Teachers College banner to run. The only legible sign near me read Right Wing Anarchists for Peace, and I was satisfied. My reward came at the end, when I ducked into Sam Goody to get warm and dry and found Eugen Jochum's Bruckner cycle on sale for

\$25.00, a not inconsiderable sum of money, but one which I happened to have in my pocket. I knew obscurely then what revealed itself clearly when the World Trade Center collapsed, that culture is the key to peace and order, that only the nurturing of beauty and the cultivation of taste can keep the Gobble-uns away for long. Even now it is not too late to love beauty as best we can—and to say our prayers at night.

But what of the dreams of our youth, of peace, freedom, and justice, of order, decency, and grace? Might we not turn from James Whitcomb Riley to Lord Tennyson, to cry out, with his Ulysses:

Come, my friends,  
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.  
Shall we not say to all who marched  
against the war in Vietnam, and to all  
who labored silently, tirelessly,  
thanklessly to preserve what of Western  
civilization is left to us,  
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and  
tho' we are not now that strength which  
in the old days Moved earth and heaven;  
that which we are, we are;  
One equal-temper of heroic hearts,  
Made weak by time and fate, but strong  
in will to strive, to seek, to find, and not  
to yield. ■

*A graduate of Earlham College and Columbia University who did postdoctoral work with the late Ira Progoff, Frank Palmer Purcell is a poet, philosopher, and independent scholar. You may reach him on the Web at [www.arisbe.net](http://www.arisbe.net). His more recent writings have appeared in Parabola and on [www.takimag.com](http://www.takimag.com).*



# The Will to Die

William Feltt

**Michael watched beads of sweat swell on** his father's pale forehead then drip onto his narrow face. His gnarled hands clawed and pulled the crisp, white sheet taught across his chest. Fluorescent light from a fixture above his bed blackened the dark circles beneath his eyes, sinking them further into his skull.

Michael opened his mouth, then hesitated. "Dad! Take the morphine. You *can't* keep this up. I don't understand. *Make* me understand, old man. Are you losing it?"

His father wasn't senile. At 65, he was sharp as ever. He never forgot to send a birthday gift to any of his six grandchildren, so Michael couldn't understand why he would endure such agony. What could it hurt? Who cared if he could become addicted to narcotics?

For three months, the pancreatic cancer had whittled away at his body and tested his mind until the figure beneath the sheet had become a trembling leaf of a man. "Take the medication, dad. Please."

His eyes flicked up at his son standing over him and snapped shut, followed by a shake of his head.

"Dad, please. What can it hurt?"

"*You know*," he said. Only an undertone of the booming voice Michael had grown up under remained.

Defeated again, Michael collapsed in the recliner behind him and cradled his forehead in his hand. The door swung open and a nurse in mauve scrubs hurried in and glanced at the IV.

"Don't do that," the old man said, raising his head off his pillow, the cords in his neck knotting and straining with effort.

She patted his clinched hand. "Just checking the IV. " She paused, as if weighing her words

carefully. "You know I don't agree... but I do respect your wishes."

"Don't want that damned... *thing* either."

"Hun, you got to have some fluids. I know you want to—"

"God," Michael whispered without lifting his head.

The nurse continued, "But this keeps you at least as comfortable as we can without administering pain meds. Doctor won't do any less. You know that... It's the least we can do here." She lifted the eyeglasses dangling from the beaded cord around her neck, placed them on her nose and studied the steady dripping of the clear fluid.

"It's all through me! The cancer. I'm eaten up. Just let me go. What difference does it make to you? You're not the one hurting. It's my choice. My death. Let me do like I want."

She cradled his hand in hers. "Talk to the doctor. You'll have to talk to the doctor. I can't do anything less without his orders." He nodded and his body tightened, face grimacing, flushing brick red in a paroxysm of pain.

To Michael, the spells seemed to last longer and the space between to decrease. The light outside had faded to a pale blue and Marissa would take over the watch soon.

He had to admit he would be glad of it; he couldn't watch much more of this. He didn't hate his father, not exactly. His mind kept wandering back to canceled fishing trips and baseball games. When his father did engage in a game of driveway basketball, he would crush him and his friends. He seemed not to age, this man who could never die, a solid, beefy man. His face still bore remnants of the father of his youth: tanned and etched with distinguishing lines, a touch of grey at the temples.

The door opened and Marissa breezed in carrying a planter of philodendrons. Michael shook his head but Marissa ignored him and went straight to their father. "Daddy, how are you doing? How's the pain?" She bent over and kissed his cheek. Its texture was that of damp parchment.

"I'm OK. Gets worse, then... not so bad. Won't be long now." She brushed her palm across his forehead, mopping the sweat from his brow.

"You're burning up. The nurse take your temp lately?" She glanced at her brother but he looked away at something outside the window.

"Yeah. She said it was 102 something. I let her give me some Tylenol but that... that's all. Feeling a little better." His head rose off the pillow and his red-rimmed eyes seemed to plead with her. "Just want this over with."

"I know, Dad. I know. It'll be over soon." She bent and laid her head on his chest.

"What?" Michael said, startling them both. "The doctor said this could go on for days, weeks maybe. You can't take this, Dad."

"He can't or you can't?" Marissa said, eyeing him coldly.

Michael shook his head. Marissa crossed the room and jerked her head toward the door. Michael sighed but followed her into the dim hallway. Before the door sighed shut behind them, Marissa faced him and crossed her arms tightly.

"Don't start with me, sis. You know I disagree with this nonsense. It's just like him to—"

"It's not yours to agree or disagree with—how Dad chooses to live or die, and you know why."

"No, I don't. I don't understand. I think he's got the cockamamie idea stuck in his head that—"

"You don't get it, even now. He believes that if you're not aware when you... when you pass, you miss the doorway to heaven."

"Shit, Marissa, do you really believe St. Peter will slam the door in his face just because he's whacked out on morphine?"

"No, but he does and that's all that matters.

Now, our father's in there and we don't know how much time he has left. Do you really want to leave him to die alone while we argue out here?"

Michael's shoulders sagged. "No... No, I don't want that. Why's he always got to be so... brave?"

"OK. Look, it's hard, but we've got to support him. Can you even imagine what he must be going through? And he is brave. Can't you—"

"OK. OK. Michael nodded.

Marissa opened the door and forced a smile.

\* \* \*

*Oh God! This pain. I don't know if... I can't get away from it... Never known so much...* He shifted and turned on his side but the cocoon of pain held fast.

The look on his son's face told him everything that he already knew; Michael was hurting most. He regretted the distance that had stood between them since he'd taken the management position at the plant. But Michael had always seemed so needy, demanding more time than his new job would allow.

Marissa was stronger, like her mother. He wished he could say something to make him understand, but there were periods during which the pain was incredible, shutting out everything and everyone around him.

He knew how irritable he'd become but couldn't help but snap at everyone. The last thing he felt like doing was explaining his decision. He himself wasn't completely sure why.

An overwhelming curiosity had dulled his fear of death. He wanted to know what came next. Was it really like they say? A bright light, a sense of profound peace, lost relatives reaching out to guide you?

Senses deadened by narcotics wouldn't allow him to experience any of that.

He had refused the priest because he didn't feel he had sinned irretrievably and didn't feel the



need for forgiveness. He had followed the Golden Rule throughout his life and really didn't know what he believed. Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost made no sense to him. Church made no sense to him. Religion made even less. And where and what was Heaven? Or, if he didn't believe, would he feel Satan's flames licking at his heels?

Something? Something was there, something after the black hole his life had become, something other than the darkness of non-existence. Born up on the wings of an angel? He doubted. He was a practical man and didn't understand the magical thinking of Christianity.

The next wave seemed to start deep in his head, wrap itself around his neck and burrow into his chest. The cancer had invaded his entire body—brain, liver, bones—and the pain came from everywhere and nowhere, the sawing of a thousand

razor blades. Only that didn't describe it either. There was no fair description.

He faltered and nearly broke into tears, swallowed hard and tried to go somewhere else in his head. The pain surrendered to an exquisite weariness and he dozed and dreamed Gloria was standing next to him, wearing a long, white, flowing robe. *Is it time, honey? Have you come for me? I've missed you so.*

\* \* \*

Michael took his hand and squeezed it, held his hand for the first time since he could remember. "Dad? ... Dad! Are you OK?"

His father's eyes had glazed over and the constant beep of the heart monitor doubled its rate. The nurse hurried into the room and pressed a



David Waters, 2009

*"Before the Planting"*

button inflating the blood pressure cuff. She studied the numbers, turned and frowned.

"Nurse, is he?" Michael couldn't hide the anguish in his tightly wired voice.

"No dear. He's just reacting to the pain, I think."

"Will it be long?" Marissa asked.

The nurse shook her head. "Hard to say. I'll let the resident on call know what's going on, but I doubt she'll want to do anything different, given your father's wishes." She hurried out of the room.

Marissa noticed the change first: The deep furrows across his forehead smoothed and his eyes changed. The dark circles beneath them lightened and his eyes softened. "Dad. How do you feel? You look... better."

He turned his head slowly toward her and fixed her with bright eyes. His color had returned to normal and he appeared his ever-youthful self. Michael leaned closer to his father. "Dad... you look so... so..."

He looked up at his son's sad smile, took his hand, squeezed it and his eyes fluttered closed. The monitor beeped rapidly then faded into one extended tone.

His grip slackened. "Nurse... nurse!" Michael yelled. Marissa picked up his other hand. It was limp and she kissed his palm, her face wet.

"Nurse," Michael said in a husky whisper. "Oh God."

\* \* \*

He pulled a breath of spring into his lungs, followed the arc of the approaching ball, lifted his hand and snapped the glove closed. The tantalizing smell of leather and cut grass filled the air. He gently tossed the ball back and watched his Michael struggle to reach high for the ball. Marissa sat, bare legs askew at crazy angles, on the front step, gabbing on the phone, as usual. The small boy reached up and froze when the ball entered his glove, just as the scene contracted and folded on

itself, turned black-and-white, and darkened.

In his head, a small spot of light expanded and a breeze whistled in his ears. An unseen door seemed to open to him and didn't hesitate to step through. He was instantly born up into the light of a thousand sunny mornings, into the spring of a thousand years, into electrified, rarified air; he felt weightless, as if he had no substance and was everywhere at once.

Below him, the sea glistened and terns tilted, hovered on the breeze then dived into the shallows. The dorsal fins of a shoal of dolphins, sliding silently through the deep, broke the surface and slashed golden wakes into the sapphire sea.

Soon, the spine of a snowcapped mountain lay below. He was coming apart but somehow coming together, or joining something, becoming a *part*. Gloria floated next to him and took his hand. She smiled at him the smile that had first weakened his knees so many years ago, turned iridescent, gleaming with the light of a million candles, a shining vessel that enveloped his body and mind.

He imagined, or somehow he knew, that their souls had become one, but many more, many he did not know and some he knew well, joined them in a glittering mass of peaceful energy that spread beyond any sense of time or space, where there was no more pain, no more pleasure, no weight, just a quiet beingness. ■

*When not writing short stories, memoirs and studying martial arts, William Felts teaches writing to first-year college students at Eastern Illinois University. He resides in Effingham, Ill., and is at work on a memoir titled Just Left of Center.*



# BOTTOM LINE

Lino Valentim

*"There is one and only one social responsibility of business—to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits."*

- Milton Friedman,  
*Capitalism and Freedom*

I

You know me, I don't pull any punches right?

"Now, let's get this straight," I say to him (and his assistant—picture Mussolini in a frock and pointy hat, wringing his hands like a bad case of Eczema). "Now it's all very well sticking to tradition—I'm religious myself, after a fashion—but we're talking about the bottom line here." I might as well talk to a wall: the Pope's drooling all over his robes on the throne, and the pap's fogeys are sitting around the Vatican Conference chamber in their robes like it was a meeting of the Ku-Klux-Klan, and these creepy guards—SS types in kinky black leather—are hanging in the shadows, itching their machine pistols. I figure it's either past the pap's bedtime, or—Pope John bloody Paul II, or not—if I don't get to the point, he's gonna die on me.

So I jerk my thumb at the Van Goghs plastering every square inch of the place like it was Sothebys. "Do we *really* expect to keep this franchise afloat," I say, "when we're pissing losses faster than the Niagara Falls?"

Then the pointy-hatted bloke—who's sitting in the front pew of the council chamber—hops out and croaks like something out of *The Godfather*. "Il Papa," he says, and starts the bowing-and-scraping-and-pecking-the-hand routine and prattles in the pap's ear. And the gist of it is 'His Holy Father' needs

his beauty sleep (so he can go raise the dead or part the Red Sea or something). So that's it for the day. The guards close in like storm troopers and I leave Vatican City thinking the CFO's gonna have a coronary when I tell him I've been holed up for three days in the Savoy like it's Alcatraz—and there's been no move.

Frankly, Jimmy, I'm feeling we shouldn't have wasted twenty quid on these dinosaurs, let alone a big chunk of Enron's pension assets. I mean how in the world do these geriatrics expect to be treated seriously, when they're telling the punters they can't even put a condom on their own Johnny?"

Get a grip Alex, I tell myself—you've seen worse, and I regroup for the wild lobster a la carte at the Savoy.

I'm in the restaurant, the 95 degree heat, the Beluga caviar and a bottle of Pigato loosening my head like a knockout punch, when Lackey-Boy struts in like he owns the place—and the Maître de's yesing him sir this and that, giving him the best table in the joint. The last thing on *my* mind is a tête-à-tête with some greasy wop. But, hell, if I'm gonna win these fogeys over, I reckon some sweet talking is in order. So I smooch on over, waiting while he stuffs his fat face with olives like they were going out of fashion—on shareholders expense, I might add—(and he doesn't even nod, like I was some trash that walked in off the street—Me, a Vice President!). But I reckon we're paying this twat's salary—right?—so I flash my deal maker's grin and park myself in the chair opposite like a toreador.

Well the frock gives me this who-let-this-cockroach-in-the-restaurant look, then leans back—slow and deliberate—drilling me with these slitty black pits for eyes.

"I did not appreciate your little display in there today," he says, in this tin C3PO voice straight out of *The Empire Strikes Back*. "His Holy Father is not just some, *customer*. His Excellency is the *Vicar of Christ*, spiritual leader of one sixth of the world's flock. Is it too much to ask for a little deference?" He makes a big show of crossing himself, fires me this deal breaker look hissing: "You cannot run the Roman Catholic Church like McDonald's."

Now I'm not a man to beat about the bush, Jimmy. So if this freak expects me to kiss his backside, just coz he's a honcho in some pointy hated sect—and this dunghill's the smallest kingdom in the world, by the way—he's seriously mistaken. So I take a long drag on my twenty euro cigar and puff it right in the wop's eyes, like it was Anthrax. "Let me guess," I go, "a question of ethics, right?"

He doesn't even answer—just shakes his head like I was some retard—like I'm the one walking round like a savage in bed sheets on the set of Harry Potter.

"Listen here, chum," I start to say, but he kills my spiel—holding this pudgy finger up like the hand of god.

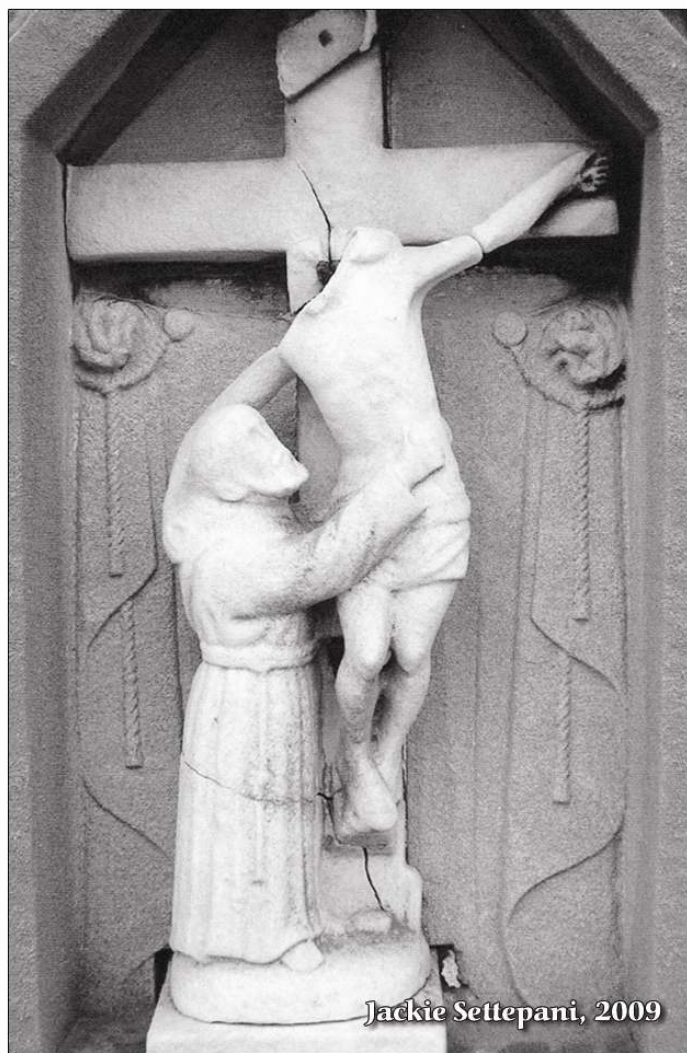
"Alfonso, My name is Cardinal Alfonso."

Elponzo—and this guy never thought of a name change? "Listen Alf," I say, "the Paps may be bigger than Madonna to you guys, but the way I see it your outfit is just another company bleeding cash, that needs to put shareholders first and rethink it's selling point—and I'm talking the spiritual concept here as well. And I'm going to tell the pap's exactly what to do about turning this little operation around."

And would you believe what Elponzo does? He says I'm morally bankrupt. (Immoral—and these guys did more business with dictators than the CIA). Anyway, I'm going to discredit the pap's infallibility—as if the dinosaur had an ounce of street cred in the first place. I'm tarnishing the "sacrament of the Holy Order"—whatever that shit means, and Elponzo—boot licker to the paps

himself—will personally see to it that I'm stopped.

"Wait a second," I go. "I didn't fly all the way from London just to be told to go home with my tail between my legs—a job's a job. Now I respect tradition like the next man, and this joint may have twenty centuries behind it—I'll give you that. But that stunt about barring fags and chicks from office, is about as consumer friendly as a neutron bomb. Hell, this franchise is up against every New-Age segment of the month—you've lost more of the 15-35 age group in a decade, than you gained in a century. Either you move with the times, or you and the rest of the little Ku Klux clowns are going Jurassic—That's no skin off my



Jackie Settepani, 2009

"Lost Crown"



nose, believe me. But I'm not about to get torched by Jeff—and trust me on this, you *don't* wanna go making the CFO angry—and explain why fifty million in venture cap went down the pan, because some dorks can't face facts."

Elponzo's quiet a while, wiping his greasy fingers on a napkin. "Fine," he says, "fine—Have it your way, but let us see how much of an effect your... *marketing*—as you bankers like to call it—has upon His Eminence's policy." And he guns me this tight lipped fuck-you-and-all smile.

Then I see it: No wonder they let me talk to the old man—he's halfway to hell, and gaga anyway; And Elponzo here has the stooges in the council—the stakeholders I gotta win over—eating out of his hand.

Then Elponzo gets up, scraping his chair, narrows his eyes and drops this napkin like it was a glove in the face. "I wish you luck."

Fine, I think. But I don't say a dicky bird. You wanna play that way, let's play it that way.

## II

So, Jimmy, I guess you're thinking let's pull the plug on these schmucks and go home, before Jeff gets wind and pulls the trigger on us—right? Christ, these jerks barely make their overheads with all those churches—let alone giving away their core service for free. But I'm wondering what kinda niche can we exploit here? And I'm guessing an untapped market worth big stock multiples—Hell, you can market anything these days with the right spin. We're talking a whole new god concept—Repackaging religion: from the poverty end (and hell, what's that segment worth to shareholders?), to the higher end—say, the 50K plus consumer segment.

Seriously, if we can flog dental care, privatise motorways, and sell tap water in bottles, why not spirituality? We've got a billion plus

suckers going to church every Sunday that we're not squeezing value from. We can capitalize on the whole god/brand thing here; play the faith card and lock in customer loyalty with spiritual air miles. Hey, and while we're at it let's do the online play—I'm talking virtual liturgy, pay-per-view sermons, and confession/prayer packages. We could build a *Second Life* presence—I mean do people actually have *time* these days to go to church? And just think of the premium we could make if we rented the Vatican City as blue chip offices?—or converted it into a theme park? And shit, if Lucas can hustle *Star Wars* figures for twenty a throw, why can't we do the whole bible set?—that's gotta be worth a bill at least, right? But unless I can convince the dinosaurs on the Vatican Council, I'm stuffed.

It's still nine in the morning Greenwich Time, so I get on the blower to Jan and run the spiel by her. "Jan," I tell her, "I need marketing to crank me up a knockout PowerPoint presentation by six morning, Italy time—with enough wow to make Steve Jobs look like an amateur."

Come morning, seven sharp in the restaurant, I'm downloading the presentation and dosing up on black coffee like it was mineral water. I still don't have an appointment, but hey, you know me, I like to hit the ground running—I figure I'll get my foot in the door and play it by ear. I've got a flight to catch at six forty PM. So I swing out the restaurant, slamming the laptop in my briefcase like it's a lethal weapon. I don't even finish my croissants.

## III

Of course I don't even get an appointment and this secretary, she's giving me the there's-no-time-in-the-paps-calendar-until the-next-century bull (some *humanitarian mission* shit in Ethiopia and such like)—as if the fifty big ones we've burned in this venture means squat to these guys. So my

patience finally snaps, and I throw a barney: making it clear that if I don't get a meeting in the next two hours, she can kiss her sorry-ass-job goodbye. Fifteen minutes later she's all sugar smiles, telling me that after all, (surprise, surprise) she might be able to squeeze me in at eight thirty for an hour, before the Pap's *Jour Fix*. So I'm back in the same room and Elponzo's there with the rest of the committee crows—slouched like pan handlers in pyjamas—and there he is, the Pope perched on the throne, white hair like candy floss, snores ricocheting around the chamber.

I've barely clicked open the PowerPoint and launched my intro, when Elponzo bangs the conference table, stands up, fingers hail Hitlering and jabbering in that weird wop way that sounds like he's had his testicles ripped out. From what I grab from the snatches of English, Elponzo's giving it the I'm-abusing-the-pap's-health-and-selling-out-Catholicism shit. Well, the storm troopers are shifting uneasily on the back of the walls, like wondering whether to kick me out right there and then, and Elponzo finishes his sermon, crossing his hands and giving me this smug-bastard smile. The council's watching me like a hawk, but I don't bat an eyelid. I've seen worse, right? (Me—Mr. Grace Under Pressure) And I walk right up to the Pap's rocking chair, who's drooling like a baby, and figure I gotta hit the what's-in-it-for-them factor right now, or I'm history.

I raise my voice—picture Mark Anthony, funeral speech, the big orator himself, and give it, "Hey, the Pap's infallible, right? So what's the big worry?"

This just blows Elponzo away. The audience is shifting in their seats like they've got itching powder in their pants, and Elponzo starts stamping around like a kid in a Kindergarten having an epileptic fit. But this younger guy on the front row barks at him to can it and sit down, and Elponzo bows like he's been smacked in the face.

It's quiet as a church now, so I see my chance and go for the pitch. "Give me ten minutes,"

I say, "and I'll show you how we can rescue this wreck, and generate serious value for the key stakeholders here." I turbo through the PowerPoint, hammering the facts and the big concept; and by the time I'm through, they're sitting there gob smacked—like someone spiked their coffee with LSD. So I launch my close. "Hell," I say, "we need to get away from this spiritually is free shit. The bottom line is... there's *no such thing as a free lunch*. Let's not forget we're talking one billion consumers here—there's *got* to be serious revenue generation possibilities in this, right?"

Then I see it—what these guy's want, that'll make it a win-win for us all.

I thumb at the corpse on the throne, "We can make paps here, spiritual CEO and you boys get majority interests in one of the fastest growing segments around—we'll throw in executive voting rights too, so you keep control and we take our twenty percent. No other company has a defensible niche like that. In my book, that's *real* spiritual strength—shit, that's a licence to *print* money. Not even the Scientologist's have that much market clout."

Some of the old men scratch their beards, and the younger guy in front's cocked his head—and I'm feeling: I'm tuned into these guys.

"And this Papal Infallibility lark," I continue, "it's a neat branding thing—if you look at it laterally. I mean we need only prop the old guy on the throne here, get him to croak some product bull, and one billion punters are gonna lap it up like the eleventh commandment. Now that's what I call leverage; hell, it's a spiritual patent. With papal directives behind our marketing teams, we can shift more volume than Wall-Mart.

Would you believe it? It turns out the guy that was sitting out front in the conference chamber—Benedict—is second in line to the paps.

We did lunch yesterday. Turns out Ben and us, have a lot in common (he's a Wharton Grad, MBA) with ideas of his own, that the cronies poo-pooed just because they've got this tradition



fetish—Ben's been just gagging for someone to lay the jazz on these old birds, so he can have an excuse to modernize the joint.

I'm seeing great things, Jimmy. Trust me, the shareholders are gonna sing our praises. I'm seeing Enron's stock going ballistic, and a front page headline in *The Economist*: "Spiritual Capitalism: A Billion Dollar Trend?"

Funding?—Got it figured. If we flesh this concept out, we can float this baby on the Euro Bond Market—get legal to rig us something low key, off balance sheet—maybe a Caymen Islands job. I'm even thinking that with the Pope behind this vehicle, we can do some cute personal investor psychology play, even ramp up our liquidity. Think about it. If my Roman Catholic investor has to choose between upholding faith in the stock, or selling on fundamentals, my bet's they'll back the pap's stock. It's beautiful: we leverage faith as shareholder value.

Trust me, Jimmy. This is gonna be bigger than the Spice Girls, bigger than iPods—hell, it's gonna be bigger than God. ■

*Valentim's writing assaults consumer culture, media power and corporate ideology and is inspired by all those artists, writers, thinkers and activists who fight the issues of our society. You can drop him a line at:*  
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## Sustainability, Mutual Aid, and Liberation

Chris Lempa

*...Continued from Page 3*

The next step would be to invite community leaders, local entrepreneurs, architects, engineers and concerned citizens to draw up a comprehensive plan of their ideal city, in which the importance of wetlands as a natural barrier must be stressed. A November 1, 2005 BBC story reported, "coastal scientists have been arguing for years that the re-engineering of the delta was leaving the population living there dangerously exposed to storm surges created by hurricanes."

It is no coincidence that one of the most devastated areas in New Orleans, St. Bernard Parish, lies just south of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO). The MRGO is a canal that drives "straight through an area of dense swampland, and local people have been campaigning for years to get it closed, claiming that it provided a 'hurricane highway' which threatened the communities east of the city."

As the Winter 2006 issue of *OnEarth Magazine* reports, "wetlands help control floods, filter toxins and impurities from water, and support migratory birds. If Louisiana's coastal wetlands had remained intact, the devastation from Katrina would have been less severe." In other words, the loss of wetlands are responsible for much of the damage.

The importance of local wetlands would not be lost on those with a vested interest in the community. Local entrepreneurs, community leaders, etc., have more of a natural interest in a soundly rebuilt New Orleans. This only makes sense considering that they would not only be involved in commerce in the city, they would also be living there. Of course, it would also make sense to look at new and innovative forms of architecture. While there is something to be said about the beauty of Victorian and Baroque architecture, it is

very likely that other forms are more suitable for the Gulf Coast's natural environment.

Since some areas need to be completely rebuilt, it only makes sense to look at new and cutting edge forms of architecture, commerce, etc. To ensure that this process is completed as efficiently as possible, various firms should be allowed to submit designs and bids. This process needs to be completely transparent. Transparency is a critical issue and cannot be stressed enough. Sustainable development, in order to be effective, must be designed according to the natural characteristics unique to that specific area.

Aside from sustainable development, Mutual Aid Organizations (MAOs) must also play a critical role. In a brilliant article written shortly after Hurricane Katrina, Trevor Simons explained that it is essential to have MAOs set up so that we are not relying on bureaucracies for help when disaster strikes.

I could paraphrase Simons or explain the theories of mutual aid, but I feel that it would be best to quote Simons at length.

We must organize grassroots evacuation, reconstruction and medic teams, prepared to respond to potential disasters in our communities. We must foster the values of mutual aid and independence from the state when these disasters strike.

We should have networks between communities in case of evacuation: housing, food, medical supplies and clean water should be a phone call away. We can work with existing neighborhood, community, religious organizations and schools where possible. Trainings should be held for basic first aid certification and street medic skills. Lists of available shelters and resources should be made available in every community. If evacuation is necessary, familiar places should be used for meeting

to arrange carpools, or if arrangements can be made, buses. - *Our Failure*,  
<http://www.zmag.org/znet/viewArticle/5460>

In other words, we must rely on ourselves and our communities to prepare and recoup after disasters, both natural and human-made. MAOs will vary from community to community based on varying needs. They will also be able to help out in neighboring communities when necessary. A network of MAOs will be much more efficient than relying on the federal government or profit seeking corporations.

MAOs will not function flawlessly, especially at first, but they are an innovative solution to common, everyday problems. An example that a lot of people can relate to is the volunteer fire department. This is an example of an MAO-style organization. The way each MAO runs will differ based on those involved and the needs of those they serve, but their basic role will be similar to volunteer fire departments, which play a crucial role in so many towns throughout the country. *Voluntary City*, a book published by the free market think tank Independent Institute, discusses MAOs that deal with various aspects of everyday life. While their ideas may differ from my ideal, they represent the range of possibilities surrounding the idea of a Mutual Aid based society.

An example of the prominent role that MAOs can play in disaster relief is Common Ground Algiers (CGA). This medical clinic is staffed by volunteers that provide health care, toiletries and even information on solar cookers. CGA was functioning before the government clinics were set-up, and continues to function after many of the government clinics have been disbanded.

CGA differs from the "charity industry" (i.e. The Red Cross, Salvation Army, etc.) because their work "aims to give hope and stability to communities by: working with them, providing materials, money, information and people working together in rebuilding their lives in just and



sustainable ways.” That’s not to say the Red Cross isn’t relevant. In fact, the Red Cross has community based, volunteer staffed Disaster Action Teams that are very efficient in providing aid when disaster strikes. MAOs, however, are designed differently and are “client driven.”

This is not an ideological or political issue, nor is it limited to New Orleans and other “disaster prone” areas. Sustainability and Mutual Aid can—and more importantly should—be incorporated into our everyday lives. These two steps will help us liberate ourselves from the oppressive forces of the dominant culture. ■

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#### SIDEBAR/POST IT NOTE IDEAS

Join your local Red Cross Disaster Action Team (<http://www.redcross.org/donate/volunteer/>).

Check out the American Civil Defense Association ([http://www.tacda.org/academy/academy\\_psychology.htm](http://www.tacda.org/academy/academy_psychology.htm)).

Become a volunteer firefighter.

Get to know your neighbors.

Grow and store food to eat and share in times of need.

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# Why Buy Local?

Shopping at locally owned businesses keeps money in the community, produces higher paying jobs, and generates more tax dollars per square foot than shopping at national chains.



“Only 18 cents of every dollar, when buying at a large supermarket, go to the grower. 82 cents go to various unnecessary middlemen. Cut them out of the picture and buy your food directly from your local farmer.”

--[www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org)

“Supporting local businesses preserves the economic diversity of our communities and the unique character of our neighborhoods.”

--[www.buylocalday.org](http://www.buylocalday.org)



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